

Newcastle City Council Candidate Forum Transcript Summary

Wednesday, October 22, 2025

6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

In-person: Newcastle Elementary School; Virtual via Zoom

Newcastle City Council Candidate Listing:

- **Kevin Kirkaldie**, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4*
- **Chris Villasenor**, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4*
- **Karin Frost Blakley**, *Candidate for Council Position No. 5*
- **Jim Quigg**, *Candidate for Council Position No. 5*
- **Paul Charbonneau**, *Candidate for Council Position No. 6*
- **Maggie Lo**, *Candidate for Council Position No. 6*
- **Sarah Goodman**, *Candidate for Council Position No. 7*
- **Andy Jacobs**, *Candidate for Council Position No. 7*

Opening Comments and Audience Orientation:

Logistical notes about the Forum:

- Candidates were not provided questions in advance, with the exception of the candidate statement.
- Candidates were provided 2 minutes for the Opening and Closing statements; and 1 minute to answer each question.
- Order of responses was determined at the beginning of each question by pulling a starting candidate's name at random and going in seated order to the right.
- Questions were collected from the community from October 3, 2025 to October 17, 2025. Questions were compiled and drafted by the co-hosting organizations: Newcastle Chamber of Commerce and the Newcastle Library.
- Community participants were asked to hold questions, applause, or any comments to the candidates until the end of the forum.

Candidate Statements:

Please tell us a little about yourself, why you are running for city council, and one initiative you would like to champion during your term.

Candidates were each provided 2 minutes to provide their Introductory Statements

Chris Villasenor, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

My name is Chris Villasenor, I'm running for Newcastle City Council, position number 4. I've been a proud Newcastle resident. Our city deserves City Council leadership that acts in the interest of its residents. Tonight, I want to... three priorities that I have. One public is foundational. Please respond to... Everybody has the right to feel like that are welcome here. And that's been throughout my campaign. You're welcome in Newcastle. We're growing, and it's inevitable that even the... regional forces and other... The growth shouldn't mean the loss of identity. We have to continue to invest in our culture. and trails. Um, but in always, heck. the character of Newcastle. today have impacts decades later.

Andy Jacobs, *Candidate for Council Position No. 7:*

I'm a veteran of the food industry. Uh, having spent 20 years. 46 at cost wholesale. I'm sure most of you know who that is. Um, I was tremendous work, which is what hot dogs are served. That was also interested in a service deli where the rotisserie chicken is. Um, apartments or

favorites for most of you here in the... audience tonight. And I'm sure... rotisserie chicken in your day.

Uh, 15 years. energy partner of a company called Axis Unlimited USA. We're a global consulting mortgage firm. My coffee experience through this? numbers are number one. I want Newcastle residents to be number one. Uh, which is a big goal line. Uh, I decided to run for this position. I could no longer tolerate the blatant hate. LGBTQ issues.

minority issues and sentiments in the community. And I felt it was time to help my fellow neighbors. uh, kind of stop. Um, I'm thankful to be endorsed by. pretty much most of the... current leaders in our community. U.S. Congressman Adam Smith, and so on. I'm most proud of the three council members that have, uh, endorsed me. Ariana Sherlock, son Burford, and Paul Charbonneau. And I just want to, lastly, sorry, I'm running... really because, uh, I believe in Newcastle, I believe in you. I believe in us, and I believe we can achieve all of this with what... if we stand together. Let's show up, speak up. and vote, uh, for the community that we believe in. Thank you.

Sarah Goodman, Candidate for Council Position No. 7:

Hi, my name is Sarah Goodman. I'm writing for, uh, City Council position number 7. In my campaign over the last few months, I have door-billed thousands of homes and spoken with numerous Newcastle residents about their concerns. While the media likes to focus on political division. Nearly all of my interactions have been respectful. If elected, I look forward to bringing these views to the Newcastle City Council to keep our city safe and thriving. I have lived here for 20-plus years with my son. My husband and I moved to Seattle... er, to Newcastle from Seattle, because we wanted to raise our son in a nice, safe community, and Newcastle has really been fantastic. On September 5th, candidate Maggie Lo emailed the Chamber president some concerns regarding tonight's forum. These were centered around fairness and impartiality due mostly to the President's personal public support and endorsement of four candidates participating in tonight's event. And I share these concerns and believe most would agree that they are legitimate. It was surprising that over 6 weeks, candidate Lo's concerns went unanswered. And they were finally answered a few days ago. The response focused on the rules for the forum, but did not adequately address the concerns regarding bias during the forum. Sadly, this behavior creates a strong appearance of collusion between the half of the candidates and the organizers. Hopefully, it's easily understood how unfair this feels to those of us not personally endorsed by the Chamber President. And while all candidate forums seek to build an environment of fairness for all participants. I don't believe this is the case with tonight's forum. Very few candidates would participate in a forum which was organized by their opponent's supporter, moderated by their opponent supporter, and includes questions written by their opponent's supporter. And for these reasons, and despite my appreciation for all those who are present tonight. And with, you know, the greatest respect for my opponent. I'm not going to be participating in the remainder of tonight's program. If you have questions, please feel free to email me.

If my campaign is successful, I pledge to focus on public safety, responsible growth, transparent, responsive government, and I'll work to keep your taxes low. My goal is a safe and welcoming Newcastle where all families and individuals can afford to live and thrive.

Paul Charbonneau, Candidate for Council Position No. 6:

Hello, everyone. My name is Paul Charbonneau. I have lived in Newcastle my whole life. I am the Assistant Boys and Girls Wrestling coach at Hazen High School for 7, going on 8 years now. I have a background as working as a mental health peer counselor, as well as a support group facilitator in doing policy work for our local nonprofit there, and I currently serve as your council

member, and I have the distinction tonight of being the OVA incumbent council member up here, running for, uh, re-election to a four-year term. I guess I'm the only one that wants to keep doing it. Um, and you know, I'm running because I'm a policy. And I love doing this work. And that's been the way as long. Whether that's a student right present of my college, study nationally as a public merit scholar. It's really what you deserve as the first council member I raised here in Newcastle, and when I was, like. Councilmember in King County, um, there are more young people now, which is awesome. And I haven't taken it for granted. I think I've been, candidly, though, so... And we don't take a look back at things I said in 2021, and having actually made good \$3, \$4 million from the state legislature, which is the type of funding we hadn't gotten for 11 years before I was elected. bringing back city events from COVID. Increasing community engagement through doubling the number of town halls, supporting public safety by voting to expand our police force and more public safety resources. And really just working and serving as our city space originally. I think 5 of the 6 seats Newcastle has for regional policy committees. So, I'm really proud to be endorsed by Governor Bob Ferguson, Congressman Adam Smith. 43 nonpartisan local mayors, council members, and county council members. Our firefighters, conservation action, MLK Labor Group. Um, and our local district Democrats, all of our legislators in Olympia. And I'm really excited to hear your questions today, so thank you.

Maggie Lo, Candidate for Council Position No. 6:

I'm Maggie Lo, running for City Council Position 6. A great city deserves a council made up of professionals. in the spirit of collaboration, people who can work together, find a common ground, and put residents' needs first. We don't need a symbolic gestures. Any Asian fan may feel safer after City recognizes a month. Doing this over the new year, an Asian family suffered a home invasion, and two more break-ins followed after. When elected, I will require monthly safety updates from the police chief. Our tax dollars are the city's main source of funding, and the resources are limited. It's easy to vote for every investment when you have no skin in the game. But many families are already feeling the financial squeeze. Later today, I find myself using digital coupons when shopping at QFC. How many neighbors have moved away because property taxes. I don't know. I will use my financial expertise to manage city finances responsibly. And make tough decisions. I'm your moderate candidate. I didn't seek or accept any party donations or endorsement. I only answered to you. I believe in harmony in our community. I'm tired of the labels being thrown around. "You are socialists, you are far-right, or he's a MAGA mayor." We are neighbors. We all shop at the same stores. Walk at the same trails. We all want the same thing, a safe and thriving Newcastle. Lastly, I want to mention that I contacted the Chamber of President about fairness about this forum. Over 7 weeks, I didn't hear anything, until 3 days ago. Unfortunately, I had already made a commitment to a live interview with Seattle Chinese radio station that overlaps with this forum. Out of respect for the voters and for this event, I came tonight to deliver my opening statement. And I sincerely thank the Chambers. hosted this event, and for providing the opportunity for me to direct the message. Thank you.

Karin Frost Blakley, Candidate for Council Position No. 5:

Why I am running: For 31 years my family and I have invested so many ways in this community; both of my sons were educated in the Renton School District- GO HAZEN!
I've enjoyed the opportunity to give back: Hazelwood PTSA President (and programs we started then are still going strong: the auction, Reading Express, the Teacher Grant program and Math Night.) 10 years on the Planning Commission, as well as on the Chamber Board. Working with Tony Ventrella putting together the Diamond Awards and the Murder Mystery in 2022.

It's also included 21 years on the Board of Easterseals Washington, and President of Women Business Owners and ABWA. Knowing this, you might say that I like to volunteer and know how to get things done. And you'd be right.

Yet, more than that, I truly believe in this community...and I want to see it thrive now and well into the future!

But I've looked at the financials, and there is a looming budget deficit arising in the next few years. It's not something we can cut our way out of, nor otherwise dodge unless we want to see Newcastle dissolve. It's time to face it...to have an honest conversation about how to tackle it. What you can expect from me, is that I'll do just that. Have truthful dialogue and explore ways to preserve Newcastle.

Frankly, it would be easier to tell you things that you want to hear, just to get myself elected. Things like "I'll cut your taxes but not cut services." But I can't do that, because I'd be lying...and you'd rightly be hacked off when I changed direction after getting elected. Nope. If elected, you can count on me to tell you the truth!

I'll be honest about this as well, you may not always agree with every decision I make, but even if you don't you can count on this fact: I will always make decisions that are in the best interest of the City of Newcastle...for ALL of our citizens! To ensure we are welcoming, fiscally responsible, safe and protective of the investment we have all made in this community.

Jim Quigg, Candidate for Council Position No. 5:

Thank you everyone for being here tonight, and for joining us on Zoom. Thank you Chamber for organizing this forum. I'm a little confused why your President endorsed my opponent, but I'm still happy to be here.

I'm happy to live in Newcastle. I think we live in an amazing town. I'm running for city council because I believe our best days are yet to come. In 2013, my wife and I chose to raise our daughter and son in Newcastle because we love its small-town feel. Newcastle feels small, safe, and quiet.

I quickly joined our HOA, started hosting block parties, planting trees, installing security lights, and being an HOA President who cares for his neighbors without ever increasing their HOA dues.

I've coached hundreds of kids in Newcastle baseball, soccer, basketball, and football. I've volunteered at Hazelwood Elementary for a decade. I raised thousands of dollars for Risdon. I've hosted Newcastle Days events, charity fundraisers, Easter Egg hunts, and Christmas tree lightings. Tony Ventrella's family just reached out to me to help them organize a fundraiser for cancer victims. I served on the Planning Commission, and now I'm one of your Councilmembers. For over a dozen years, I've spent most of my free time serving our community.

Not for awards. Not for the Facebook likes. I do it because it's who I am. And it's who I'll keep being if you keep me on your city council.

**MISSING STATEMENT(S) from the following candidates, due to Zoom connectivity issues:
Kevin Kirkaldie**

After Opening Statements, the following candidates participated in the Questions portion of the Forum:

- **Kevin Kirkaldie, Candidate for Council Position No. 4**
- **Chris Villasenor, Candidate for Council Position No. 4**

- **Karin Frost Blakley**, *Candidate for Council Position No. 5*
- **Paul Charbonneau**, *Candidate for Council Position No. 6*
- **Andy Jacobs**, *Candidate for Council Position No. 7*

Allison Sweeney: Thank you for your opening statements. We'll go ahead and continue on with our second question. The principal was brought up earlier. I do want to mention that Mayra and myself (Allison Sweeney) Reviewed all of the questions that were submitted by our community for this event. And, Mayra and I went through and sorted them out, and looked at what the biggest topics were, and we took little bits for different questions to string together our questions for this evening.

So if you submitted a question, you might hear some of your own words in some of these questions that you're going to hear tonight.

The remainder of these questions were either submitted by the community, or were something specific to small business case? So let's see what our candidates have to say. This next question has to do with city engagement.

*Candidates were each provided 1 minute to respond to the Questions 1 - 6 *

Question 1: As a City Council member, being informed is essential for effective decision making. Can you please share what steps you take to stay engaged with what is happening in the Newcastle community?

Chris Villasenor, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

Thank you. Staying informed and staying engaged is. important part of being a citizen. I think that we all have a comfortable level of engagement. Some people, uh, will not come to a candidate forum, some people will not attend a city council or a committee member meeting. I do those things. I'm happy to attend, uh, City Council meetings, and when I can't make it to the City Hall, I generally watch either it on Zoom or on, uh, you know, or a recording of it. So it's available to us. I mean, we have the ability to be part of our communities. I enjoy having conversations and, you know, some deeper than others with regarding to local policies or what's going on in our city with regard to, uh, local government. But, uh, but being part of it is the best way to be engaged. And it's a commitment I've made for myself. Uh, to do that.

Kevin Kirkaldie, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

You'll probably hear this from me a lot. Um, a lot of it is... the example is campaigning, and I've... If I haven't already been to your door, you're one of the last few remaining. And I've probably met several of you if you were home when I went. So I've been all over Newcastle, I've been to every home except the last few. And I'll get there in the next couple of days. Um, and if I see at the grocery stores, I'm a friendly person that likes to meet people. I enjoys making friend, so a lot of you are my friends, too. And that's how I'll carry forward, that's how I know what the community likes and wants. For Newcastle is hearing it from you. I'm not gonna come in with my own agenda and my own ideas of what to do. It's going to come from you.

Karin Frost Blakley, *Candidate for Council Position No. 5:*

You'll see a common theme: talking to people. That is how you stay engaged and know what's going on in your community. And I did that a lot when I was on the Chamber and on the

Planning Commission. I might have grabbed you outside of a grocery store asking your opinion, for example, and we were looking at updating zoning laws and talking about density when I was on the Planning Commission. Um, talking to business owners was so crucial when I was president of the Chamber and trying to keep the business community going during COVID. I was... I was trying to do my best to make sure we were going to have a downtown core area. Talking to the business owners was very key.

So, also attending events, wandering around, talking to people. You might have seen me at one of the outdoor events recently, and I think it's so key to find out what you're thinking and what you're feeling. And also, attending events, like the Chamber Luncheons, breakfasts, after-hours events. That's another way to stay engaged. Or. This is really fun, sitting in on those city council meetings.

Paul Charbonneau, Candidate for Council Position No. 6:

Thank you. So I think, um... you know, I think a lot of folks come into City Council work with a lot of ideas of the things that they want to do, and that's good. You want... you want that, but I think the good elected officials are the people who are able to take a beat and sometimes set aside the things they want and focus on the things that the community needs. Um, and I've tried to do that really hard. I try to keep my ear to the ground, right? Whether it's, um, driving, uh, rent school district van full of kids at 5am every Saturday for 4 months out of the year, um, and then telling me what their parents are saying are... Um, creating the spaces where folks can engage, right? Increasing the number of town halls. Adding a childcare room, moving it down from the golf course, suddenly the folks that start showing up to those settings were a lot more diverse. A lot more young folks like myself, right? And greeting that space, and then being active and going out. I started a mentorship program with Bellevue College students and state government students, uh, while Bellevue College is in Newcastle. We actually have several constituents that are professors there, we have several constituents that are students going there, and I think, um. I think just the other thing I would say is, uh, a good way to stay informed and engaged is to hold myself accountable in front of all of you, and uh, yeah, not walk out of a forum. And actually, uh, answer your questions, and... be... be accountable to you, and be present. So, I think not being here speaks volumes, and I think it's an elephant in the room to not call that out.

Andy Jacobs, Candidate for Council Position No. 7:

I'm new to politics, uh, I am on the Olympus HOA Board. And I made a commitment when I decided to run, that I would attend, uh, as many City Council meetings as I could. I could have been to about 90% of them. I wanted to make sure I understood... had a working understanding of not only what the community was looking for, but what the actual City Council was doing at the meetings and so on. Um, I've done, uh, I know my opponent said she's knocked on thousands of doors, but... Uh, I've done 1,600 doors with the help of many people, not only in the audience, but the community themselves, but Also listening to what you have to say. Uh, and even attending Newcastle Days and opportunities like that to talk to you, so... That's my current community involvement.

Allison Sweeney: Thank you, candidates. The next question.

Question 2: The City of Newcastle values the safety and inclusivity of our community. If elected, how would you actively work to ensure Newcastle remains a welcoming and respectful place for all residents?

Andy Jacobs, Candidate for Council Position No. 7:

So, probably most of you in the audience and in the community understand what's been going on recently. Not only with myself, but uh... Councilmember, uh, Sherlock. Um. We have to have an inclusive community. It's really important. that, for me. Especially when my opponent and others talk about public safety. It does not mean... Um, that they should be endorsed by somebody putting out hate mail that does not mean that, uh, they should... stand for hate, or have signs in people's yards that stand for hate, and so on. We need to be inclusive. And we need to really understand that there is significant hate going on right now, and I hope to be able, on the City Council to curb that and help the community heal from all the things that are going on currently.

Paul Charbonneau, Candidate for Council Position No. 6:

I think I'll start first and foremost. I know a lot of folks paid attention last year when we made the news. Unfortunately, because the council majority decided they didn't want to raise the pride flag like in years past. And for me, as someone that, you know, my roommate in college was someone I played college football with who's a gay man, and struggle to feel accepted in that group. and coach LGBTQ athletes. Uh, I was just being honest about being frustrated about it, and then... Put slash onto it, and I think when you create some of that environment for. uh... pushing down inclusivity, you... you create some environment for hate, um. I've been really glad to see us change course on that, really glad to see us have a first Lunar New Year proclamation, have our Hindu Heritage Month proclamation, um, we just started a youth council and there's more I'd like to do. You know, for me I was the... I'm the first renter that's ever been elected to the Newcastle City Council. I'm the youngest by far, our largest age bracket in the city is actually 25 to 34. I think most people do not know that, and that kind of shocks a lot of people. I think my voice is really critical to doing that. We need to engage more younger folks. You do engage more folks that are not wealthy and have the, uh privilege to take time to go to City Council.

Karin Frost Blakley, Candidate for Council Position No. 5:

I really believe diversity makes our community stronger. And I think it's very exciting to see... when you look at the stats on Newcastle, we are a very diverse community. So, I will be, if elected, looking for opportunities to try to bring the community together so that they can talk, understand the different points of view and the different cultures, and the different backgrounds people have. The Lunar New Year you were talking about, Paul, some of the other cultural events, we can certainly highlight and promote. And really foster even more opportunities for the community to get together and find areas where we can come together. Versus areas that we see ourselves apart. I also think that the tone of City Council can affect this as well. I see we're running out of time, but making sure that our City Council works together in a collaborative manner and is respectful with our points of difference.

Kevin Kirkaldie, Candidate for Council Position No. 4:

I'll be brief again. I think Newcastle is already inclusive. I think I'm an American Indian, and I've been very welcomed here. Um, and had no problem fitting into the community and meeting people and enjoying each other's company, no matter who they are. I think this is a prime example. And one of the reasons I'm running. It's because the current city council has their own agendas, and they're not listening to the people, and they're not going out to the community. They had some opinions on something, and so they argued about it. And they buy one boat, and I don't even remember what they decided. But it wasn't for our... it wasn't for us. It was for an agenda they had. Um, so I'm against that. and the other dealings I've had with them were

similar to that. I went and spoke at several City Council meetings with my daughters. They spoke also. And I felt like people had their mind made up before they listened to us. They weren't listening to us. Um, that's the primary reason I'm here. I'm a great listener. And I think I can do a lot better than that. So, that's... and I think we're an inclusive... Newcastle is inclusive and a beautiful place to live.

Chris Villasenor, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

I have a very straightforward approach to making a, um. community more inclusive, which is to say, let's not make it exclusive. And that's, uh, it's a... it's a... I know it sounds very plain, but our council majority has done many things to make people feel like they're on the outside and not part of our community. I know when I first took an interest in, um, becoming, you know or just engaging with our, you know, local government. People were very welcoming to me. Well, most of them, and encouraged me to continue to move forward. I was the first person of color to serve on the, uh, on this Newcastle City Council and I never felt like I was on the outside, and I really think the... people who were on the City Council, who worked on the city staff who made me feel like I was part of the process, that I was valued, and I promised to do the same thing for all people who come to City Hall.

Allison Sweeney: Thank you, candidates. The next question.

Question 3: What do you think is the biggest problem or opportunity facing our small businesses, and how would you work to address it?

Paul Charbonneau, *Candidate for Council Position No. 6:*

Yes, I quite literally, um, you know, that idea of talking about putting aside some of the things that you're rah-rah about and doing what the community needs. Um, that's what I did when I started an economic development committee in Newcastle, that was not my background. I worked in a non-profit. I'd been a student of public policy, policy of public health, but I saw that we needed it, and I saw our businesses were struggling, and I took the... effort to create that space for folks to engage. And there are a lot of opportunities, quite candidly. I push really hard for getting a traffic light coming out of the QFC parking lot. Um, to make it... one, make it a safe left turn, also have a crosswalk for the folks there. That'll help our local businesses, because more people will slow down and stop in Newcastle research shows. I push for wayfinding signs, sort of along Coal Creek Parkway, leaving the golf course, which research shows, uh, will tell folks there are businesses back there in our commons that they don't know about. Tell folks that are coming here just for the golf course to. "hey, go stop them downtown and support our local businesses". Um, I brought that forward with the City Council. It would have cost \$15,000 or \$20,000 or less, which is very small. compared to a relative budget, um, they kind of... they said no, but, uh, hey, I'm still here, I'm still running, I want to bring them back. Um, we have a lot of people that commute through our city, and I think we need to take advantage of that.

Karin Frost Blakley, *Candidate for Council Position No. 5:*

Small business challenges. One of the biggest challenges they face is online ordering, right? Any of you order through Amazon? Okay? I think we're all guilty of that, right? When I was with the Chamber Board, and we were dealing with COVID, you know, we were talking about, shop local! That is the biggest thing you can do to keep your community vital and going. It'll help generate more sales tax revenue. And did you know, if you shop local. 60-70% out of every

dollar you spend stays in your community, percolates along. Because your small business owners are... Um, engaging with a bookkeeper that's in your area. Right? Maybe a marketing person in your area. You can't do more for your community than to shop local, and that would be something that I would definitely be pushing for. It also helps our sales tax revenue, which helps the bottom line, helps our revenue. So, shop local in Newcastle, that is something you can do for those small business owners.

Kevin Kirkaldie, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

Um, I don't know enough about this. Yeah, because I haven't been involved in the challenges of the businesses. My thoughts are that we have one of the biggest thoroughfares right through the center of town. No reason for anybody to stop. So I think we can attract businesses that will maybe have people pull over, and I think marketing is huge, and marketing is a big part of my background. I don't think I mentioned. I worked for more than 30 years in television and local televisions around the country, and most of it in marketing. I think we can do a great job of marketing, and it will entice people to come and spend time in businesses.

With my daughters, I see that they go to the landing, and a lot of the kids here go to the landing for certain reasons. Menchie's is one of them, but they come down here for boba. There are certain things we can, you know, foster those types of businesses that will give people reasons to pull over and spend some time here, and maybe make it a more inviting place. Um, invite our kids down here more, too. It's an easier walk safer distance, as far as I think, with my daughters.

Chris Villasenor, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

Supporting our local businesses is... extremely important. I think that, uh, you know, I know a lot of the small business owners, they work hard. They're trying their best to make sure that. They're providing for their families as well as the community. Um, during COVID, we had an opportunity to use ARPA funds, and the R in ARPA stands for Rescue. We had an opportunity to invest some of that money back into small businesses to give them. Um, to get them going. We had an opportunity to increase marketing, to increase all these other things that would have done that, and we didn't get a chance to do that. Um, unfortunately, uh, the budget went the wrong way, and the council majority, uh, voted to use that to pay for expenses as opposed to investing it back into our community, where we produce a return. So, I'm going to want to find... ways to get money back into the, uh, into the, into the community and support those businesses. I think it's important.

Andy Jacobs, *Candidate for Council Position No. 7:*

Look, I'm a business person. I understand business, I've been in business, like I've said. 46 years. Uh, the first thing we need to do is talk to the small business owners here and understand what their needs are. Uh, we also probably need to get off the front page of the news and attract some new people to the community to... promote the businesses. Um, I think we should talk to the landlords and see why rents are the way they are and some of the things going on, and... Yes, we... I'm one of the new guys here as well, and... these people that are up here, some of them know way better than I do the ins and outs of the traffic and all that. Um, I know I can't get out of the Tapatio parking lot, because there's no light there. So, um, those are things we can do to take a look at how to help our businesses and the community.

Allison Sweeney: Thank you, candidates. The next question is about collaboration.

Question 4: How will you promote collaboration between small businesses, and local schools, nonprofits, or cultural institutions.

Kevin Kirkaldie, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

Well, that's a tough one. That's complicated. Um, I'm not sure. This is where I would turn the people in the community and listen to their thoughts. Um, it's not something I'll create on my own and decide this is my agenda. It's communication. Communication is the key to everything. So, I would just keep it that simple, learn what everybody wants and what everybody thinks about where we are now. And where we want to go. And then... start there, follow... follow the lead of the people who know.

Chris Villasenor, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

You know, collaborating starts at the top. I think that, um, when you have a... government that collaborates together, uh, when they're efficient and they're effective. Um, and you have a city staff. that collaborates and is efficient and effective. It gives us the opportunity to create an environment and a community that is both efficient and effective. Communication is the key. Completely agree with Kevin on this that it's about being part of the community, not being apart from it. And, um, and that, uh, and that... you know, works, um, you know, for... for the schools and the businesses. And, uh, all the others here in Newcastle.

Andy Jacobs, *Candidate for Council Position No. 7:*

Not easy answer, but I think the first thing is to have open dialogue with the different groups. I don't know what the schools are trying to do, honestly. My youngest daughter's 30 years old, I haven't been in the school system for a while. So, um, also with the small businesses, communication is key. Um, we really need to understand, through communication, what's happening in our community. And who better to tell us what's happening is to listen to the people in the community. The businesses, the schools. the nonprofits, and we have a lot of resources in the community. We have some very good city council. people that will help guide us to where we need to be, and so on. Tough question. I really don't have a... stand up here and make something up for you, but I think communication in all aspects of what we're talking about tonight is really the key to where we're going.

Paul Charbonneau, *Candidate for Council Position No. 6:*

Yeah, this is a very hard question to answer in one minute. I think this is my superpower, quite candidly. Just, you know, I remember as soon as our city managers, Scott Pingle came on, I went with him to sit down with the Renton School District Superintendent and the Issaquah School District Superintendent, and get to know each other.

Um, I remember the other day, a couple months back, sitting down with our Board of Seattle economic development team and our Community Development Department saying, how are we going to collaborate? How are we going to prepare for the things that are coming? Um, I remember sitting down with the American Muslim Advancement Council, and I did not know there is a mosque that is very close to Newcastle, right on the border. Uh, right where exit 7 is on the border with Renton. I didn't know that. So... putting in the effort to go in and engage with these groups, and... have these meetings, um, my opponent has openly said she isn't going to engage with any of these elected officials, and thinks they're corrupt, and referred to our legislators as, um, out of touch. And I just think that's so, um, asinine, and...It's so short-sighted.

I think we need to be meeting with people and bringing people in. I'm eager to keep doing it, quite honestly.

Karin Frost Blakley, *Candidate for Council Position No. 5:*

What an exciting question. None of us received the questions ahead of time, except for that first one about the opening. Collaboration. I can really see City Council being a bit of an incubator for this idea. Um, any of you remember when Washington Mutual? Washington Mutual, um, used to be, in our elementary schools here in Newcastle, they would help the little kids with their savings. They would kind of... We could develop more of those partnerships with small business owners here. Um, I think we can evolve the chamber. But you could... you could develop a group between the small business owners, the city council could kind of collaborate and help hold hands, and the school district. I've always found the school district, particularly the Renton. I'm sure, um, Jessica would be the same way. Um, looking for ways to introduce the kiddos to the business community. And I think even getting the ideas from the kids could really be an exciting concept. So, thank you for bringing up that question. That really is exciting, um, idea.

Allison Sweeney: Thank you. Okay, the next question is about teamwork.

Question 5: Tell us what your role and responsibility is to our council and community in order to work and function as a cohesive and respectful team.

Kevin Kirkaldie, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

That was the luck of the draw. Some being new, I don't know if there's a signed role that you're asking. My role would be, or what I would make my role. Can you still hear me? So, I'm an inclusive person that's easy to talk to and communicate with, and I listen really well. Um, and I have friends with everybody that I meet, so it would be easy to talk to the disputes that the councilors recently had, I would be on both sides, in the middle and top, and understanding both an agreed-upon conclusion. I don't know why it's doing this.

Um, I think it's, uh... I wondered if somebody would be in this and start talking about their opponent in a negative way. And it happened, and that's a little sad. It's a little bit telling. Um, I think people can cooperate without attacking the other person. And I think you help everybody by building each other up. And not, you know, disagree with their opinion in a friendly way try to reach a commitment and a conclusion together, rather than talking. And to do that when that person's not here to defend themselves, even worse. Um, so I just think... I think it's doing this on purpose. I just... I'm an inclusive person, and I mean easy to get along with and listen to and take everybody's ideas into account, and I'll be very good at that. I think if you like the way Newcastle is going now, stick with the people that are here, but I think we can do a lot better.

Chris Villasenor, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

As far as team cohesiveness goes. Um... And at the government level, it's important to be able to speak combined and be honest and respectful. And I think, and listening in a way that's also honest and respectful. the, um, the nature of it is that people aren't going to agree. Um, there are facts that you can put out in front of people, and they will not agree. Um, so what we do is we... present ourselves... present our ideas in the best way possible. And we work... and we work toward something that... maybe is not the... what each of us had in mind, but something that benefits the community at large. How can we... can we agree on what makes the most

good? Can we decree on what does the most good for the most people in this community on any given issue? And it's not going to be the same. And... and you have to go into it knowing that it's not going to be the same. But you have to be a thoughtful and respectful person. and present yourself that way. Thank you.

Andy Jacobs, *Candidate for Council Position No. 7:*

Um. I pride myself, personally, on pretty much getting along with everybody that I meet regardless of whether I agree with them or disagree with them. I don't agree with a lot of people, quite frankly. Um... But, uh... I think it's important as a city councilperson to. Uh, really pay attention to what's going on, not only in the room, but... in general, with everything going on in the community today, had. Look, I've talked to a lot of people, a lot of you know me in the room here. Um, I don't think I've ever... personally disparaged anybody for... having an opinion about something. I may not agree, but look, um, there's a way to do this. I think we can streamline the Council to the point where, when we disagree with something, it doesn't have to be a two-hour conversation. We can, uh, be inclusive. And I think... look, we've got to start listening. There's a lot going on in this community, and somebody's got to start paying attention to it, and I hope to do that on the City Council.

Paul Charbonneau, *Candidate for Council Position No. 6:*

So I think... I think a lot of folks don't know this, but uh... Mayor Clark and I often disagree on policy, but in my, um. Right after I was elected in our first meeting, actually, uh, told me he thought I would make a good mayor and nominated me to do that. Um, and I, I, uh, declined the nomination, and you know, working together over the years, um, I serve as our chief person on regional policy committee the Public Issues Committee, which is a really, you know, important committee and role. And I realized, oh, you know, if your car was frustrated with me, he could... he could pull me from that role at any time, right? Because the mayor controls his appointments. Um, and he didn't, and I talked to him about it, and he said, because I know you're going to work hard at it, and I know you will give us a thorough report. And, you know, I think a lot of people have external views of things that are happening, right? But, um... I do work hard, I do have... trying to, you know, work as a team with these folks, um, find the common ground move forward with that, right? And... We have gotten some good results, right? And I've been so excited to, you know, work with. like, Deputy Mayor Lakhotia on Hindu Heritage Month, um, and I see Beth behind me, so I will stop talking.

Karin Frost Blakley, *Candidate for Council Position No. 5:*

So now I can pop up. Yes, I can. I got a knee replacement a while ago. Exercising that. Um... First of all, as City Councilperson, you have to remember that you are working for the entire city. You've got to park your personal feelings away, and with that in mind, you are working the entire city. I've experienced decades of being chairperson and president of this organization, and that organization. I have found it so vital to remember you're debating the idea of someone you're not debating somebody to get personal. And always, always look at areas of cooperation and collaboration. It'll make your organization stronger. You'll get better ideas. Um, and you can do a lot more for your community, um, and for your organization. So, the other thing that I would remember is, for those of us who are Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, right, we would learn to be respectful to one another and hold on to... I think it's important to remember that, too, when you serve County Council.

Allison Sweeney: Thank you again, candidates. Um, the number one question that we received, or the number one idea that we received questions on was the budget.

Mayra and I looked at all of the questions, and did our best to put together a question that candidates, you have an opportunity to answer the question how you want. This isn't a specific question. Um, we hope that it will answer a broad answer to answer most of the questions that were submitted.

Question 6: Please tell us what your fiscal policy is regarding the 2027 budget and beyond, and please be specific as possible.

Andy Jacobs, Candidate for Council Position No. 7:

You know, I gotta tell you, um, sitting in the city council meetings, uh, recently, and the budget's been talked about, and so on. Um. It's a tough question, because... I'm not on the City Council, so I don't know some of the inner workings with the budget numbers, and it appears to me that we have some issues going into 2027 that we have to address quickly in 2026. With the City Council, whoever's on the City Council at that point, and be prepared what that looks like and be upfront with you all what that really is. Um, and I don't know what it is, because I... look, I've worked, because you heard, I was at Costco for a long time. I've, uh, done budgets for, uh, half a billion dollar department, so... um, budgets aren't the issue, but we have to look at what the line items are where we could potentially make the biggest impact without jeopardizing safety, and so on and so forth.

Paul Charbonneau, Candidate for Council Position No. 6:

Yeah, I think... there long-term, we need to, you know, we need to address what will be a long-term budget shortfall. And by the way, that's not something that is... A shortcoming of our staff, that's not something that is a shortcoming of the people serving our Council. That is every damn near city is facing the same thing. And that's something that just, you know, has happened with a lot of governments. So... We've taken a lot of steps. We've, uh, I advocated for an admissions tax on the golf course, which generates \$330,000 worth of revenue. We've gone from when I started, 28.6 full-time employees to 23.2, which saves us somewhere in the ballpark of \$400,000 to \$500,000 a year. But the police cost is going up year over year, it's going up over \$200,000 next year cost of fire services going up year over year, going up over \$337,000 next year and we give cost of living adjustments to our staff so they can still work here, and we can hold good talent, because not having good talent's been more expensive. So, that's why I've been really proactive in securing state dollars, really proactive in the economic development front, because it's a conversation we need to start having. Quick-handedly, I'm not gonna tell you what you want to hear, uh, tell you what I think we need to do.

Karin Frost Blakley, Candidate for Council Position No. 5:

Part of my day job is I'm a financial planner and a financial advisor. Back today, I was working on two financial plans for people, and some of them have got some serious, uh, expenditure and revenue issues. So, um, I've been digging into the budget, and that is one of the major reasons. You heard my opening statement as to why I'm running. I really think my talents, my experience will come into play and really help with this particular issue for our city. About 30% of our budget goes to public safety, and that is an important piece that people keep asking about, is safety, safety, safety. Police goes up, um, over, um, 6%, uh, this coming year, uh, fire over 11%. When your revenues from, um, property taxes are only going up maybe 1% you're quickly

running into an expenditure issue. So, I want to hear from the community. What do you... what are you willing to either cut to meet the budget that the money we've got coming in, or what are you willing to then incur in the way of additional revenue sources?

Kevin Kirkaldie, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

I'm like Andy. there, so I'm not privy to them, what's going on with the budgets. Um, I have ears, say. I've heard that we've had a surplus for a number of years, and we'll have a surplus this coming year. And I have also heard there are certain members on the Council that. Um, never met a tax increase that he didn't like. So, I don't know personally, uh, if you ask my wife, you know, then you would know my stance on spending money, and it's... carefully and wisely she balances it out a little bit. Um, but I'm... I came from Montana, and I... came from small beginnings, and I'm careful about how money is spent. Um, so with me there, the influence role, but... the influence will be to spend wisely. Um, and I think I can work together with people that work more in that direction. And spend money where money shouldn't be spent.

Chris Villasenor, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

Um, sometimes... you're in front of... you're in front of it, sometimes you're behind it, um, in this case. That went from... the savings account into the checking account to balance the budget. Okay? That's money we're not going to have next year. That's... in 2027, that \$710,000 is not available to us. Also, with regard to police, we, um... aren't, given all the police that we pay for. And we get a refund of about \$450,000. Uh, every year. So... If we add up those two numbers, if King County Sheriff gave us two more police officers. In 2027, we're looking at a swing of about \$1.1 million that we can't account for I don't know what we'll do at that point. Hopefully, you'll have elected smart enough people who are ready to sharpen their pencils and figure this out. But that's the reality of it. We're a little behind it.

Allison Sweeney: Candidates, thank you so much for being here this evening, and... Um, thank you to everyone in the audience and in our community who submitted questions. Our final portion, we'll hear from our candidates this evening is just their closing comments. And they'll have 2 minutes.

Candidates were each provided 2 minutes to provide their Closing Comments

Paul Charbonneau, *Candidate for Council Position No. 6:*

So, a former planning commissioner who served with my opponent for 4 years and is a supporter of mine, said earlier this year during a meeting, uh. Why are we proposing something to go to City Council if we believe it's not compliant with the law? We're stewards of public resources as members of this commission, and frankly, it's irresponsible if we're putting forward policies here that we know are going to be in violation of that. And I think that's the only because I think, more candidly, I'm the only responsible choice. Am I race this election? I've been working my tail off to secure resources for the city, create new opportunities for folks, and carefully craft policies to plan for the future, and build really strong relationships in our community. And my opponent voted for a comprehensive plan that would put our city in legal jeopardy, uh, lose out on grants, and actively tears down connections and has blatantly lied about my record on the mailer, and won't even sit here to be held accountable for it. She's trying to scare you with things that are not true about my... Advocacy for affordable housing. She voted to remove any mention of climate change, science. group making policy decisions, acknowledgements of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and references to any housing types that are pretty much not exclusively

for the wealthy. I tried to make our area more inclusive through raising the pride flag, Hindu Heritage Month, Lunar New Year, pioneering a college mentoring program. Meanwhile, she's accepted donations from at least four community members and one council member that are on public record as. Against pride, against diversity. And accepting donations from folks who are serving as a character witness for Mr. Steve Tallman just last week about. email he is sending out. I think in the race, you have a choice between an incumbent who has put in the work to make our city safe, inclusive, and vibrant, and been incredibly effective at the local level. And a challenger who, according to King County Elections Public Records, did not even vote in the most recent city council election in 2023. Um, she's shown you how she's gonna go over, and she's shown you folks you'll align yourself with.

I love doing this work. I hold people accountable because we control millions of dollars in these positions. It's important work that affects all of you. And, um, so really, you keep doing it, so please vote. Thank you for being here. Happy to take any questions afterwards that folks have, too.

Karin Frost Blakley, *Candidate for Council Position No. 5:*

Back in 1994, when my family and I came here to Newcastle, we actually built our house. And back then, our house actually was in the city of Renton, believe it or not. There was this little finger of land that snaked up into what then became Newcastle, and my house was in it. And even though we loved living in the area, loved, loved the beauty of the land and the flora and the fauna and the great neighbors. There were a few little quirks with this, because pizza delivery guys would go to my neighbor, because they were in Newcastle, but not to me, because I was in Renton. The garbage guys get totally confused, because one side was, you know, the road was rent and pickup, one side was Newcastle pickup. And all sorts of crazy things happened. One was the fire department couldn't find my house one day. Took them a half an hour. In fact, they called me for driving directions. So that was not good, because I decided, you know what? We're going to get rid of the hookah written. And I, uh, worked with my neighborhood, figured out how to de-annex this hook of Renton and persuaded City of Renton to let us go, City of Newcastle to bring us in. I killed the hook of Renton. And so, you can say I brought in some more land to Newcastle.

In fact, I believe so much in this city, that's why I did it and why I'm running today. And if you believe in this city as I do. And want to see it continue for decades to come. Consider voting for someone like me, someone with decades of volunteer experience, also business experience. I've been a financial planner for over 20 years. Prior to that, I was in marketing and sales. And ran a team. And I really believe in this city's future. I would be very, very honored to work for all of Newcastle.

Kevin Kirkaldie, *Candidate for Council Position No. 4:*

Thank you. Mine will be brief. Thank you for being here is the main thing. Um, if I haven't met you yet, I will. And we'll be friends. Um, and if I haven't left a flyer on your door yet, you'll see it soon. Um, I just... Thank you for the opportunity. Uh, I've had a little experience, and I think that we can go in a better direction. Um, and if you agree, I'm the guy for you. I have... high hopes and lofty goals for what we can be and the direction we're headed. Um, I think we can get there quicker. I think we all kind of have the same feeling of Newcastle as unique and small, and safe and quiet. Um, and I want my daughters to be raised in that atmosphere, and I think everybody loves that about Newcastle, and I hope I'm right.

Chris Villasenor, Candidate for Council Position No. 4 Two years ago, I lost a close election. Um, but 10 months later, the person who beat me in that election quit. I didn't. I'm here. We've been given a voice by this community tonight, and it's... it's special. And what you saw are three

candidates quit. I find it baffling. I find it wildly disrespectful that you would all come out here, and those people would walk out. So here's my ask of you. All who came out here tonight. You also have been given a voice, and that voice comes in the form of a ballot. Okay? Don't lose your voice. Don't quit on Newcastle. Vote. That's my ask. Thank you so much.

Andy Jacobs, *Candidate for Council Position No. 7:*

I'm gonna read this, because I think it's important that you hear what I'm trying to say and making a point of some of the things. Thank you all again for coming tonight. You're being here shows that, like me. We care deeply about the city. You have heard a lot of information this evening, but I hope that when you cut through the noise and the drama. Uh, this is what you take away. Racism and hate, though, do exist in Newcastle. Some of us are ready to face that truth and work together to change it. Others would rather use fear. and divine as disguising it as concern for safety. What our city truly needs, and what this council truly needs, is leadership that brings people together. Leadership built on community, inclusion. and respect. Someone who is committed to making our city government more effective and efficient. someone who is experienced to bring people and businesses together. And the heart to ensure that public safety means protection. From hate, exclusion. and gun violence. Like so many of you, I love this community. It has been my family home, my family's home for 31 years. I want to do right by it. I want to be your voice for everyone in the community, whether you agree with me or not. I will work every day to earn your trust, your confidence, and your vote. I'm truly humbled by the support. so many of you have shown me. In the past few months since I decided to run. And as I said in my opening remarks. I believe in Newcastle, I believe in you. I believe in us. And what we can achieve when we stand together. Let us show up, speak up. and vote for the community that we believe in. Thank you.

Mayra Corn: We'd also like to give a round of applause and special thanks you all being here today.

We did have some technical difficulties, and so we will see what the recording bears. However, we will, at the very least provide a transcript. with what was said tonight, it was reported in the chat that video did suffer quite a bit. For those of those watching online right now, I'll go ahead and answer a couple questions that came in chat.

But those of us in attendance, the Forum has ended. Thank you so much, and then again, once again, round of applause for our candidates.

Allison Sweeney: Thank you all for coming and attending. Thank you to Newcastle Elementary School for hosting tonight. Candidates are available to talk about.

Transcript notes:

- Transcript was auto-generated by Zoom.
- In order to retain the Forum's integrity, the raw dialogue was retained as-is [filler words such as *uh*, *um*, were retained].
- Instances where the question was asked to be repeated were removed.
- Names of candidates, prominent community members, cities (Renton, Issaquah) names were corrected if misheard or misspelled by the autogenerated transcription.
- Time markers and text were removed to combine each candidate's answer into one cluster.
- Zoom room opened at 6:30 pm.

- At 6:50 pm, video was cut from the Zoom recording to save bandwidth and allow for clean audio and transcript.

Transcript Summary is respectfully submitted by: Mayra Corn [10/24/2025]