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Statement from Mayor Jerry Tolley regarding last Saturday's truck caravan

On Saturday, September 19th a politically-based caravan of approximately 20 vehicles drove through Elon. During this event, several members of the group chose to make obscene gestures, shout vulgar obscenities and direct slurs at people along the route. While I endorse everyone's opportunity to demonstrate their political affiliation, I neither endorse nor condone the verbal assault of our residents and visitors.

I have been asked why we didn't cite these individuals for certain words or phrases they used. The simple answer is that they did not break any laws. The laws of the United States and the State of North Carolina are very clear that this type of speech is a protected right.

As the Mayor of the Town of Elon, I pride myself on the strength of our community. We are an open and welcoming town and the adopted goals and policies enshrine these virtues. Myself, the Board of Aldermen, and town staff strive daily to make sure that people of all walks of life feel safe, with no regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexuality. This means that we cannot exclude people from outside our community from coming here with their individual views and values, which may be different from our own.

For those students and year-round residents of Elon who were offended or felt threatened by the events on Saturday, I hear you. Further, I commit to you that our ordinances and laws will be fairly and uniformly enforced. Unfortunately, sometimes that means that vile and offensive language or actions will take place.

To make it easier for all residents to bring their concerns to the Board, we are planning to hold a series of Town Hall meetings at different locations. We are currently searching for places to hold these meetings, and working to develop a way of holding them that conforms to the gathering restrictions that we are all living under due to the COVID pandemic. Stay tuned as we work these details out and announce these meetings.

