

Candidate name (first and last):	Todd Easton
Office the candidate is seeking:	Ward 5 City Councilor
1. How do you see transportation, housing, and climate issues connecting and how will you work to align them if elected? [600 character limit]	All three overlap as clear equity issues. The marks of delineation among thriving families and communities center right here: Access to reliable and safe transportation; access to wealth-building home ownership or a stable rental scenario; and access to amenities and resources like clean air, open spaces, and clean water. Using these as markers, municipal governments can create strategies that overlap meeting these needs, keeping all three issues as a framework for success.
2. Often street projects designed to improve safety and public transit involve removing on-street parking or reducing the number of vehicle travel lanes to make space for people walking, biking, and transit infrastructure. With a new mayoral administration taking over next year, how would you be a strong advocate and leader on the council on transportation issues, even amidst pushback? [1200 character limit]	All options being considered need to be analyzed before implementation. Is it cost effective, will there be redundancy, will it be used, does it need to be done immediately, how will it effect businesses and abutting residents? All stakeholders should be engaged in bringing about a result that improves safety while also providing transportation options that are feasible for all residents. People's entrenched views need to be challenged respectfully as street project improvements are considered.
1a. Which of the following modes of transportation do you use regularly in Somerville? (Check the top 3.)	Car, subway, walking
1b. What types of housing have you lived in or owned throughout your life? (Check all that apply.)	4-to-6-unit building, over-six-unit apartment building, as a renter, home ownership, single-family home, urban, suburban
1. Somerville has just initiated a process to create a citywide bicycle network plan which will show how street space will be allocated to create bike infrastructure for people of all ages and abilities. How will you work to ensure that this network will be built in a timely manner? [1200 character limit]	Depending on the financial environment of the City and business environment what types of effects it will have will determine the speed in which it will need to be built. Constituent concerns needs to be addressed before things are shovel ready.
2. What strategies do you support to improve accessible pedestrian infrastructure, particularly for those with vision impairments or using mobility assistive devices? [1200 character limit]	The City should continue to rely on national and state resources for the most current guidelines on best practices. The City should be aggressive in policing businesses owners that do not properly remove snow during winter which impairs mobility.
3. SomerVision 2040 mobility goals include reducing Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and prioritizing walking, biking, and transit access. How will you continue to implement the City's Complete Streets Ordinance for both short-term and long-term projects? [1200 character limit]	I believe that seniors in particular are being left out of those programs. While I support the mobility goals, consideration must be given to those who are not physically able to walk and bike or who work shifts that would not allow for safe walking or biking or use of public transportation off hours. We need to be sure we consider the impact of these programs on such populations.
4. Some of the more dangerous roads in Somerville are owned by state agencies, including McGrath Highway and Mystic Avenue. How will you work with and push state agencies, such as MassDOT and DCR, to make much needed changes to improve safety along busy corridors? [1200 character limit]	The next Mayor needs to keep these issues at the top of the priority list. With help from the Council and residents, the Mayor need to continue to engage the state delegation to force action to improve safety. The Council can assist in keeping residents engaged on these issues to keep pressure on the state agencies to take action.
5. While the MBTA controls bus service, the City of Somerville controls the streets the buses operate on. How would you accelerate bus service and bus priority infrastructure? [1200 character limit]	Somerville should engage the MBTA in a conversation about ways to increase and accelerate bus service. The City and Council needs to remain engaged with the MBTA to ensure City priorities are met. An analysis of City-wide demand should be used in adding or reducing service based on ride usage.
6. Through the Bus Network Redesign process, how would you ensure those who need bus service are able to provide feedback and have their needs heard through the process? [1200 character limit]	The City must ensure that messaging it getting out to the ridership of the bus network about proposed changes to garner feedback on constituent needs. This should include ready information available on the buses advising on where comments can be sent. The City must be able to track submissions for transmittal to the MBTA to be sure constituent consideration is given throughout the process.
7. Living near high traffic roadways causes public health issues, such as increased rates of asthma, due to the pollution caused by vehicle traffic. In Somerville, environmental justice communities experience the burden of bordering I-93. How would you work to mitigate and address issues of health equity in these communities that result from car traffic? [1200 character limit]	The City and Council need to lean on it state delegation to continue to apply pressure on the state in its studies on health impacts of proximity to 93 and provide, as need, community health clinics to treat impacts.
8. The MA state legislature is considering creating a new dedicated governance board for the MBTA, emulating the Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB). Given this, how would you utilize the board meetings to advocate on important issues that might be outside the City's control? [1200 character limit]	It is not clear to me how the new proposed entity will differ from the existing board, but regardless, this is not a catch-all solution for fixing the broad systemic problems of the MBTA. That said, the City should already be engaging with this process! The board meetings are open to the public and Somerville should be in the room and at the table when decisions are being made that will impact our residents and local businesses.
9. Somerville is expected to get tens of millions of stimulus dollars from the federal government. How would you prioritize spending those funds, and how would housing and transportation priorities fit into that plan? [1200 character limit]	Consideration will first have to be given to any rules set out by the federal government regarding utilization of such funds. The City should conduct a needs-based analysis to assess where best to expend such funds. In particular, those most impacted by COVID should be considered in prioritizing spending with a goal towards creating lasting impacts.
10. What do you propose Somerville should do with the \$30M community contribution for Green Line Extension that is being returned? [1200 character limit]	Somerville should use this money to pay down any bond debt it may have.
11. A recent report from the MBTA found that the Green Line Extension (GLX) project will largely benefit higher-income, white residents, after an initial study 10 years ago determined the project would benefit environmental justice communities slightly more. How would you ensure that lower-income residents continue to benefit from transportation improvements and have access to affordable housing near transportation? [1200 character limit]	The City needs to make sure the right amount of density with the right amount of inclusionary affordable housing is built near transportation hubs to try and sustain the population that are in the greatest need for these units. I would not support any special dispensation to developers building large residential developments allowing them to reduce the required 20% affordable unit requirement
12. In a new housing development where space is limited, and parking adds substantially to the cost, how would you prioritize space/think about tradeoffs (between more units, parking, open space, etc.)? What would you do in the face of community opposition to developments that seek to balance these priorities? [1200 character limit]	Every situation and development needs to be evaluated with its own lens keeping in mind City priorities. Where there is opposition I would bring together all stakeholders to listen to each others concerns and work towards a development that is more appealing to all sides.
13. Somerville's inclusionary housing program requires that new developments of over 18 units include at least 20% of the new units be affordable and income-restricted. There is conversation about increasing the program's percentage; however, experience and research around the country has shown that setting the percentage too high can actually reduce the total number of new affordable units built. Would you support a new 12 unit building where 50% of the units are affordable over a 60 unit building where 20% of the units are affordable? Why? [1200 character limit]	I would support a new 12 unit building with 50% affordable units over a 60 unit building with 20% affordable. While this obviously creates fewer overall units, in my view the ratio allows for a more inclusive environment in bringing a more overall socio-economic diverse development.

<p>14. Increasing density is one of the goals of SomerVision to advance the housing stock and affordability, but Somerville's zoning code restricts how dense housing can be built. There's also pushback because Somerville is already "the densest city in New England" with ~80% of the city made up of two and three family houses. How would you address pushback and ensure that Somerville can meet its density goals set goals in SomerVision 2040? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>Certain parts of the City that where there are open areas of development that are closet to rail stations are best suited for dense development, provided that the quality of life of abutting neighborhood is not impacted. In certain parts of the City it may not make sense to push more density.</p>
<p>15. What actions or policies that fall under existing municipal powers (i.e., do not require a home rule petition) do you support to help prevent displacement? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>The key here is not to position the City as a penalizing entity, but rather as an incentivizing entity. The City's Office of Housing Stability has a number of initiatives to help homeowners and renters.</p>
<p>1. The Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition supports the removal of direct policing from Vision Zero goals, citing issues of equity and a lack of effectiveness in improving safety. You can read about these issues in the Vision Zero Somerville 2020 Report Card and the Coalition Statement on Gov. Baker Administration's Road Safety Legislation. Do you support removing police enforcement from Vision Zero?</p>	<p>Neither Support nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Conflating these two issues can be problematic and the root causes of these issues are very different. But both are incredibly high-priority needs, and leveraging one issue to get traction on another is not an unusual practice in legislating. I can see a benefit and a challenge to both approaches.</p>
<p>2. Police details are often required for construction projects and open streets events -- it would save money and create jobs if community members were allowed to do this work. Civilian flaggers were first authorized in 2008 to help fill these roles in Massachusetts; nevertheless, these projects and events are still primarily staffed by police on overtime, and detail requests often go unfilled entirely. Do you support reducing police involvement in streets-related projects and events?</p>	<p>Neither Support nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>The type of event would need to be considered to determine if a police staffing makes sense. I believe the City should have clear and defined parameters around projects and events to appropriately assess that need. When use of civilian flaggers is deemed sufficient to insure safety, plans must be in place to ensure that such flaggers are properly trained.</p>
<p>3. One key strategy that has been proven to effectively reduce speeding, improve safety, and remove racial bias in traffic enforcement in other states and countries is automated enforcement (i.e., speed cameras and red-light cameras). The MA Vision Zero Coalition is specifically supportive of the following bills due to their strong protections around equity and data privacy, H.2426, H.2532, S.1545. If the State House passes this automated enforcement legislation and allows cities & towns to opt-in to a speed or red-light camera program, would you support your municipality using this tool?</p>	
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	
<p>4. Do you support filing a home rule petition for the City of Somerville to implement automated enforcement within the municipality if legislation is not passed at the state level? If you are supportive, please describe how you would ensure the crucial equity and data provisions are included in the petition.</p>	<p>Neither Support Nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>More studies need to be completed to determine how these types of enforcement measures can implemented in an equitable manner.</p>
<p>5. Many injuries from traffic crashes happen on busier arterial roads. Do you support traffic calming for high-crash intersections and roadways of arterials to prevent crashes and save lives, even when it means taking away parking or travel lanes?</p>	<p>Neither Support nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>While I am obviously supportive of doing all we can to prevent crashes and loss of lives, I do not think a blanket policy of change would necessarily be good for the City. The particular roadway in question, must be studies and evaluation to determine the bas approach to improve safety.</p>
<p>6. Mode shift occurs when people get out of their cars and choose other ways of getting around. Do you support the City's SomerVision 2040 goal of reducing vehicular traffic so that 75% of work commutes are made via non-car mode by 2040?</p>	<p>Somewhat Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>This assumes that everyone works near public transportation, works shift hours that coincide with operation of public transportation and work in jobs that allow for flexibility should the public transportation not be reliable. Additionally, may present challenges for those with mobility that make walking or biking challenging or impossible.</p>
<p>7. To achieve many of Somerville's stated goals in Vision Zero and SomerVision 2040, additional curb space will need to be reallocated from parking to create safe bike infrastructure, bus lanes, and pedestrian improvements. The current price for residential parking permits in Somerville is approximately \$3.33 a month, while the market rate for off street parking is much higher. Do you support raising the annual fee for residential parking permits?</p>	<p>Neither Support nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>It may not be realistic to install bike lanes on every street and in order to assess any such permit increase I would need to hear more about the use of such increased revenue. In addition, I think such permit increases would unfairly burden those with mobility issues that may have to rely on a car or those with work schedules that do not comport with public transportation schedules.</p>
<p>8. Do you support free bus service on the MBTA, and a low-income fare option for other public transit options?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>If a financial solution for this can come from the state as too big of a burden on cities. In addition, free service will not necessarily increase ridership if the service is unreliable.</p>
<p>9. Are you supportive of an ordinance similar to Cambridge's Cycling Safety Ordinance which would require protected bike lanes designated in the upcoming bike plan to be built on city streets when they are being reconstructed?</p>	<p>Neither Support nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>A blanket requirement may not be the best approach as the particular location must be considered to determine if such addition would be safe, not be redundant and would be utilized.</p>
<p>Adding parking to housing developments is expensive and increases the cost of housing. Mandatory parking minimums for new developments near MBTA train stops have been eliminated. Do you support eliminating parking minimums city-wide?</p>	<p>Neither Support nor Oppose</p>

<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>The overall city parking plan needs to be evaluated in connection with the established environment. May be challenging in the already built portions of the City.</p>
<p>11. Improvements to affordable housing in Somerville requires not only increasing production and allocation, but also increasing the amount of housing that will maintain its affordable status in perpetuity. Do you support the goal of making 20% of Somerville's housing stock affordable in perpetuity by 2040?</p>	<p>Neither Support nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>This question out of context is difficult to answer. The affordable housing stock is hugely important and we need a greater mix and more affordable options, but the overall economic health and safety of the city are the highest priority. Without being a policy expert on the big picture and long-term impacts of this commitment, I support it in theory but cannot give blanket approval to a 20% commitment in perpetuity for anything.</p>
<p>12. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) adds a 1.5% surcharge on net property taxes and qualifies the city to receive matching funds from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund to help support affordable housing in Somerville. It received a 76% approval as a ballot question in 2015. Do you support increasing this surcharge to further support affordable housing as part of CPA?</p>	<p>Neither Support nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>The City needs to come up with other options that put the responsibility on developers and commercial tax base for development of affordable housing. Surcharge increase may have a disproportionate burden on the residential property owners in the City and additionally is not what the residents voted to approve.</p>