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| Candidate name (first and last): | Judy Pineda Neufeld |
| Office the candidate is seeking: | Ward 7 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] | Transportation and housing are both critical issues of environmental justice and must be deeply intertwined with our climate policies. Our transportation policies must work to incentivize alternatives to cars and I would advocate for increasing the number of protected bike lanes and pilot fare free busing. We must also work to increase housing density near transportation, and ensure there is a large percentage of affordable units, especially near the new Green Line Extension. I will also work to build new affordable housing with a net-zero carbon footprint. |
| 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] | One of the great things about Somerville is that it is a city rich with ideas. We must make sure our streets are safe and accessible for families walking with strollers, those with disabilities, bikers, and public transit users. However, I don't believe this must involve pitting drivers against pedestrians and bikers; there are ways to meet all needs. We currently have the action plans that could help keep pedestrians and bikers safe and create more accessible sidewalks through Vision Zero and the Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets recommendations. As City Councilor I will advocate for their thoughtful implementation using community input, and working to compromise with the parking needs of car owners and small businesses. I am committed to implementing these plans and developing a timeline that gets it done. It's not just an infrastructure issue; it's about safety, accessibility, and climate justice. |
| 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.) | Duplex/Triple-decker, 4-to-6-unit building, As a renter, Urban |
| 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] | As City Councilor I will put pressure on the administration to ensure the timely construction of our citywide bike network. This is a critical safety and mobility issue for our City, and it is important that everyone has the option to travel around Somerville by bike. I will ensure these projects are prioritized by the Department of Infrastructure and Asset Management, and that when the City is doing work on our streets as part of other projects, adding a bike lane is incorporated into their work. |
| 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] | We must make the streets of Somerville accessible to all, including those with vision impairments or limited mobility. I believe all new development in Somerville must be ADA compliant, and I would explore ways to incentivize retrofitting older housing to be more accessible. I will also continue the fight for accessibility at the new Green Line Stations. As City Councilor I would ensure the Commission for Persons with Disabilities is at the table when discussing development and would work with them and disability advocates to come up with creative solutions for accessibility in our City. |
| 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] | Somerville has taken the important step to invest in the development of the comprehensive Somerville 2040 plan for a more sustainable and equitable future for our City. As City Councilor I will work to hold the new mayoral administration accountable for implementing these vital steps to prepare for Somerville's future. I will hold hearings and will publish regular updates on the progress of both the short and long term provisions of the Complete Streets ordinance, and will push for more aggressive accountability measures for sustainability and equity. |
| 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] | From my years of experience as a community organizer and public servant to the City of Somerville, I have worked to cultivate relationships with many of our City's representatives in the State Legislature. This includes Ward 7's Representative at the State House, Rep. Christine Barber, who has endorsed me in this race. I will continue to develop and leverage these relationships to help push state agencies and provide a platform for accountability on much needed safety improvements for our community, such as promised funding for pedestrian safety improvements at Mystic and McGrath, sound and pollution blocking barriers along I-93, and studies on safety improvements for rotaries along Route 16 in Ward 7. |
| 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] | Improving the quality and accessibility of bus service is an essential step in improving mobility, equity and environmental sustainability in Somerville. As City Councilor I will support the addition of dedicated bus lanes and other infrastructure that will improve service and incentivize ridership to further reduce congestion on our streets. As City Councilor I will also push to pilot a fare free bus program in Somerville, that will help remove important mobility barriers for our most vulnerable residents. |
| 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] | As City Councilor I will maintain clear and open channels of communication with all of my constituents here in Ward 7. I will be sure to listen and relay their feedback using my platform to deliver the message to the MBTA during their redesign process. I will also be sure to conduct outreach and solicit feedback in multiple languages so that everyone in our community, regardless of their English proficiency, has the opportunity to be heard. |
| 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] | Somerville's state legislative delegation has done incredible work to secure funding for sound and pollution blocking barriers along I-93 to mitigate its effects on Somerville's environmental justice communities along its route. As City Councilor I will be a voice in support of the timely construction of these barriers and will work to hold MASSDOT accountable for completing this project. |
| 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] | I will use my platform as City Councilor to speak out at the board meetings to advocate for the communities of Ward 7. This includes pushing for fare free bus services, increased routes, electrified buses, discounted subway fares, and more. I will also be sure to seek community input and pass on the concerns of my constituents. |
| 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] | Somerville will be receiving \$60 million in ARPA funding from the federal government and I believe that how we spend it is a direct reflection of our values. We must ensure that the funds contribute to an equitable recovery for all Somerville residents, including providing flexible relief funds for those behind on their rent, permanent permit and fee forgiveness for our struggling small businesses, and multilingual and multicultural mental health services for those who have suffered from isolation, depression and addiction during this pandemic. For transportation I would prioritize putting funds towards the pilot of a fare free bus program to ensure more equitable access to mobility in our City. I would also put funding towards the further construction of dedicated bike lanes to ensure cyclists and drivers can safely share our streets. |
| 10. What do you propose Somerville should do with the \$30M community contribution for Green Line Extension that is being returned? [1200 character limit] | I am a strong supporter of the further development of the GLX to include construction on the previously proposed Route 16 stop in West Somerville. This station would provide important transit access to a densely populated area of the City that includes a large number of public and affordable housing units. The \$30 million the City had already allocated towards Green Line Expansion could be reinvested in the project contingent on the inclusion of this station. Some of this money could also be invested in the construction of more affordable housing units, and ensuring these units are built with a net zero carbon footprint. This would help address our City's housing crisis and would contribute to long term sustainability. |
| 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] | As City Councilor I would push for increasing housing density around our new Green Line stops. This housing must include affordable units and I would implement a streamlined inclusionary housing process that ensures these units are accessible to everyone. As stated in the answer above, I would also be in support of using some of the \$30 million in community contributions being given back to the City to build more affordable housing along the GLX. |
| 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] | Like I said above, one of the great things about Somerville is that it is a city rich with ideas. We must work together to ensure we are not pitting drivers against other needs, such as affordable housing and green space. As City Councilor I would prioritize more housing over parking to address our affordable housing crisis, and would work to lift the parking requirements that often come with big developments, especially near public transit. However I still believe we can work together to maximize both of these interests. This must involve creative solutions that work with our zoning code to build up using the space we have. I will advocate for their thoughtful implementation using community input, and work to compromise with the parking needs of car owners and small businesses. I am committed to implementing these plans and developing a timeline that gets it done. It's not just an infrastructure or a development issue; it's about safety, accessibility, and climate justice. |

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| <p>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]</p> | <p>I support the requirements that create the most affordable units, therefore I would prefer a 60 unit building with 12 affordable units over a 12 unit building with only 6 affordable units. As City Councilor I would also push to raise the affordable housing requirement for a building that large to 30%, and ensure that there are family units included (not just 1-2 bedrooms). We also need housing at multiple income levels including deeply affordable low income housing and workforce development housing.</p> |
| <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>Increasing density in our City is an important part of the solution to our affordable housing crisis. I believe this should begin around our new Green Line stations, where residents will have easy access to public transportation. This must also be done with a simplified inclusionary housing process that ensures these new units are available to all. As City Councilor I would also propose for Somerville to allow accessory dwelling units (also known as in-law apartments), like has been done in Boston, to increase available rental options. In addition, I believe in seeking out community input and working with Somerville's neighborhoods to address the concerns of residents around increased density, and will push the City to address concerns with policies that will grow the capacity of our public transportation, roads and bike lanes, and schools to handle a growing population. Somerville has always been a place that is open and welcoming to all, and as City Councilor I am committed to making that possible for both new and existing Somerville residents.</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>I believe housing stability and keeping folks in their homes needs to be a part of our strategy to prevent the displacement of Somerville residents. I support increasing the capacity of the Office of Housing Stability and its access to flexible rental relief funds so they can meet the urgent needs of our neighbors who are struggling to pay rent as a result of the pandemic. I will also work to reduce unnecessary evictions through a permanent tenant's right to counsel program, and an extension to the eviction moratorium. Long term community recovery from this crisis needs to include a housing plan for everyone.</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? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>Our police force is used for too many roles that could be done by civil servants. Traffic enforcement is often the beginning of harmful and sometimes deadly interactions with the police and I would advocate for the transition of this role away from traditional policing involving armed officers.</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? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>I support civilianizing additional roles within the Somerville Police Department, and details for construction projects are one that could be done by civilian traffic patrollers. This would be a small but positive step towards reimagining the role of policing in our community.</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? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Somewhat Support</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. Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Somewhat Support</p> <p>Automated traffic enforcement has the potential to provide racially neutral traffic interventions. If implemented, I would support comprehensive data collection on the performance of these measures to ensure they are a truly equitable method of traffic enforcement for our community.</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? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>The top priority for roadway construction must be safety, and it is critical we rethink how space is used in Somerville's deadliest intersections so that we can save the lives of pedestrians and drivers needlessly killed by poorly designed roads.</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? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>As a City, Somerville must work to incentivize trips by walking, biking and public transit to reduce our carbon footprint and ensure long term sustainability.</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? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Somewhat Support</p> <p>I support raising the price of parking passes to incentivize other methods of transportation, but only if there are exemptions for those on fixed incomes or classified as low income. As a City, Somerville must ensure the raising fees does not contribute to further displacement of current residents.</p> |
| <p>8. Do you support free bus service on the MBTA, and a low-income fare option for other public transit options? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>Strongly Support</p> <p>As City Councilor I would absolutely support this and work to pilot a fare-free bus program in Somerville, thus reducing our carbon footprint and helping our most marginalized communities. This will insure equity of access to public transit and incentivize ridership over car use.</p> |

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| <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>Strongly Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>To increase accessibility in Somerville, I'll push for the allocation of funds to build protected bike lanes. Requiring all new construction to include bike lanes will be an important and effective cost saving measure to allow the timely implementation of an integrated bike network across the city.</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>Strongly Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>The GLX, combined with the existing subway and bus stops in Somerville will enable all residents to live in close proximity to public transit. This combined with an improved network of bike lanes will enable Somerville residents to get around with alternative methods of transportation to cars.</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>Strongly Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>The supply of affordable housing in Somerville for our lowest-income families and individuals remains deeply inadequate. Steps must be taken towards creating a City where over 20% of housing stock is affordable in perpetuity.</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>Strongly Support</p> |
| <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p> | <p>This surcharge unlocks important state funding that the City can put towards Somerville's top issue, our affordable housing crisis. As City Councilor I would advocate for Somerville to implement this popular and effective measure.</p> |