

## Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Please submit completed questionnaires by Saturday, May 4.

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### PUBLIC SECTION

*The public part of the questionnaire contains a mix of yes/no and open-ended questions. Please keep all answers to open-ended questions to no more than 150 words.*

#### (A) Your Candidacy

1. What would be your top three priorities if elected to serve?

**Preserving and increasing affordable housing (“affordable” being defined by City of Boston mean incomes not the Area Mean Income, which is considerably higher).  
Addressing issues of displacement and gentrification.**

**Economic Development and upward social mobility for all Boston residents.**

**Increasing resources for and transparency within the Boston Public Schools**

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

**I have a proven history as an activist, facilitator, organizer, and strategic planner. I know how to build inclusive coalitions, create, advocate for, and implement policies across diverse neighborhoods.**

3. What do you see as the role of the City Council in our strong-mayor system?

**The collective role of the Council is to represent the interests of the people and neighborhoods of Boston, irrespective of the Mayor’s policies. The role includes timely**

**notification to those people and neighborhoods of municipal actions that affect them. In addition the council should operate as a monitor (down to individual line-items) of the budget in order to insure accountability and available resources in City policy.**

**(B) The Budget**

1. What programs would you focus your budget advocacy on?

**Broadly I would focus on insuring transparency and accountability within the budget process, after which I would focus on directing resources within education, housing, and economic development to meet currently unfulfilled needs.**

2. The City Council currently has very little ability to influence the budgeting process. Would you support legislation to enable line-item budgetary changes? Are there other measures you would propose to give the City Council more influence over the budget?

**I would support such legislation.**

**I would support legislation mandating transparency and public access to all budget information, down to individual line-items. I would also support reinstating the Council Audit and Post Oversight to monitor existing City expenditures.**

3. More than \$60 MILLION of the requested Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) contributions have been left unpaid. What would you do to improve Boston's tax base regarding PILOT fees?

**I would advocate for full funding of PILOT assessments. I would also work with the City Law Department and interested outside counsel to see what legal options are available to increase PILOT revenues.**

**(C) Education**

1. What would be your top three priorities for improving the equity and quality of education in the Boston Public Schools?

**Increased transparency of current education expenditures, cross-referenced by program and school.**

**Reconnecting the interactions between and among students, parents, and educators.**

**Enhancing the relationships between education, human service, and other City agencies, to develop holistic policy approaches.**

2. BuildBPS could significantly change the footprint and configuration of BPS, and possibly trigger the sale of BPS real estate assets. As a City Councilor, what will you do to make sure this process is transparent and driven by improving school quality and equity as the primary outcome?

**In addition to policies of transparency cited above, I would work to provide timely notice to all stakeholders, particularly parents and students so that any action regarding the physical facilities are consistent with the interests of stakeholders.**

3. Do you support changes to the current structure of the school committee? If so, what would be your ideal structure? If not, why not?

**Ideally, I would prefer a return to the elected District and At-Large mixture that immediately preceded the current appointed School Committee.**

4. What would your priorities be for youth development efforts outside of school time?

**I would work with advocacy groups, neighborhood associations and funders to create neighborhood-by-neighborhood best practices. "One size fits all" does not work in a City as diverse as Boston. I would also advocate for job training programs that worked in the past like Opportunities Industrial Centers (OIC).**

#### **(D) Public Safety**

1. Do you support requiring the police department and other city agencies to get City Council approval before acquiring new surveillance technologies?

**Yes**

2. Do you support District Attorney Rachael Rollins's do-not-prosecute list and expanded approach to dealing with those low-level offenses?

**Yes**

3. Do you support ending information sharing between the Boston Police Department and ICE? What steps would you take to address the comingling of data?

**Yes, and I would sponsor legislation to do just that.**

4. Do you support shuttering the Boston Police gang database, which tracks the associations and activities of thousands of Boston residents, 98 percent of them Black or Brown?

**As currently constituted the gang database includes many residents, innocent of gang affiliation, but entered into it do to common friendships, schools and recreational activities. At the very least, the current system must undergo a massive change.**

5. What are your ideas for addressing the opioid crisis, and what would you plan to do to build support for such ideas?

**The opioid crisis is one of several symptoms of local civic collapse, requiring efforts including, but not limited, to treatment. Thus, all those agencies and local associations involved would have to develop bottom-up collaborative approaches specifically addressing the crisis as it impacts given neighborhoods. The best way to begin to build support for such an approach is to personally go into impacted neighborhoods and ask for support and advice.**

#### **(E) Transportation**

1. What are your top priorities for advancing efficient, equitable, and environmentally sustainable transportation in the city?

**I would work with the Boston Delegation in the Legislature, transit groups, the Boston Transportation Department and other stakeholders on order to have sufficient information to make informed decisions.**

2. Do you support the goal of fare-free public transit?

**I would support reduced fares for the elderly and those of limited income, but in the absence of a pro-public transit consensus within the Legislature, it would be counterproductive to advocate for fare-free policies in an already underfunded system.**

3. Do you support bringing back late-night T service?

**Yes.**

4. Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. What steps would you advocate to help Boston to achieve this goal?

**My only issue with Vision Zero is that it is over-dependent upon electronic communication; and hence unknown to the average Boston resident. I would work to communicate on a person-to-person basis to residents, both to educate and receive feedback from those residents.**

#### **(F) Environment**

1. What are your top three priorities for making Boston a more environmentally sustainable city?

**Mitigating traffic congestion and increasing residential access to mass transit.**

**Reviving organized environmental justice at the neighborhood level.**

**Insuring that there are green standards in the planning and construction stages of ongoing and new development.**

2. Climate change will have a disproportionate impact on communities of color in Boston. What steps would you propose to make sure that equity is prioritized in Boston's climate mitigation and adaptation planning?

**In addition to increasing access to mass transit (communities of color are disproportionately dependent upon private automobiles. I would support mechanisms to minimize the costs of retrofitting residential and commercial properties, so as to lower their carbon footprints. Furthermore, I would work with community-based people in the building trades and within vocational education to create a Green New Deal at the municipal level.**

3. Do you support a municipal commitment to power all publicly owned or operated facilities with 100% renewable energy by 2025?

**Yes**

4. Do you oppose the creation of new fossil fuel infrastructure in Boston?

**Yes**

5. Do you support the adoption of a curbside composting pickup program?

**Yes**

**(G) Housing**

1. What are the most important changes you would support to make Boston a place where people can afford to live -- and thrive -- at any stage of their life?

**This would take a judicious mixture of programs, including (but not limited to) a return to rent control, increased Section 8 vouchers, and public land trusts.**

2. Do you support the creation of a city-funded housing voucher program to provide rental assistance for homeless families and individuals in Boston in the face of continued funding cuts and long wait lists?

**Yes**

3. Boston's inclusionary development policy (IDP) requires that 13 percent of the units in a building need to be affordable. (a) Do you support increasing this number? If so, to what? (b) Do you support requiring that a majority of new affordable units be built on-site, in order to ensure communities are diverse and integrated?

**Yes, with the proviso that “affordability” is based upon the mean income of Boston residents, not the much higher Area Median Income.**

4. Would you support the City of Boston building a database that tracks what is being built, where it is being built, and who can afford it in order to ensure that housing policies enacted yield their intended results, and that tracks demographic data on the beneficiaries of housing programs to ensure equity in program design?

**Yes**

5. By the 1970s, many cities separated the functions of development and planning/zoning into separate offices. Boston remains a notable exception. (a) What concerns do you have about the current operation of the Boston Planning and Development Agency? (b) Do you support breaking up the BPDA and creating an independent public office of planning?

**It must be remembered that the legal name of the BPDA is still the Boston Redevelopment Authority, given the wording of the enabling legislation that established it; the label “Boston Planning and Development Agency” is purely a dba (“doing business as”).**

**The issue with the current Agency is its lack of transparency and accountability. Absent a means for the public to vet operations in real-time, creating an independent public planning agency would not address the problem.**

#### **(H) Economic Opportunity**

1. Boston routinely ranks as one of the most unequal cities in the US. What steps would you propose to reduce our steep income and wealth inequality?

**There must be a comprehensive evaluation of all City Projects, Programs, and Agencies in order to insure both accountability and results. As things now stand, reducing income inequality and insuring upward economic mobility is simply not a priority in local government. For example, neither standard K – 12 education nor vocational education is geared to the needs of students (excluding those in Examination Schools).**

2. Do you support requiring city contractors to give their employees at least two weeks’ notice before changing their schedules and to compensate workers for late schedule changes?

**Yes**

3. The cannabis industry is expected to be a major source of growth in Boston in the coming years. Do you support giving licensing preference to city residents and individuals from communities that have been most impacted by the war on drugs over large companies from outside the city?

**Yes**

4. According to a November 2018 report, only 0.72% of over 14,000 city contracts were awarded to minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs) (approximately \$4.3 million of \$646 million spent). What strategies would you use to hold the city accountable and dramatically increase the city's investment in MBEs?

**I would use the power of my office, in coordination with MBEs and community groups to monitor contracts-to-let and existing City procurement policies. Furthermore I would work to insure a more equitable process to proactively insure greater and more timely access to bidding.**

**I would also sponsor workshops and trainings to insure that MBEs have greater knowledge of the procedures and processes necessary to obtain contracts.**

5. What steps would you take to support artists and the creative economy as a driver of culture and opportunity in Boston?

**Access to, and education about, the arts should be restored to K-12 education. My concern is that community-based arts programs and institutions have been allowed to collapse, resulting in the creative economy being largely a precursor to gentrification. While I support the creative economy, there must be mechanisms to insure access to that economy by creative people of limited means or creative people of color.**

6. Boston has 13 designated "opportunity zones," where investors can get significant tax breaks for developing property. What steps would you propose to ensure that such development yields shared prosperity, rather than displacement?

**Each impacted neighborhood should get timely notice about developments, including site plans, requested variances, and neighborhood impacts. The latter would include projected employment and economic impacts of proposed development, as well as scheduled processes (such as Zoning hearings) in order to maximize community input.**

### **(I) Democracy**

1. What steps would you take to increase participation in city government, particularly among voices not currently engaged?

**One reason for the decrease in political participation is the collapse of those local and neighborhood civic institutions that gave residents a stake in politics and public policy. I would work with advocacy groups, neighborhood associations, and various City agencies to embed participation into local civic affairs. Furthermore, I would work with the District Councilors to insure that all residents get timely information about policies and actions that affect them.**

2. Do you support requiring landlords to provide voter registration forms in the packets provided to new tenants?

**Unfortunately, registration in isolation does not equate to voting. (Turnout in the Mayoral election in 2017 was only 27%. I would, however encourage same-day registration and early voting.**

3. Cities across Massachusetts and the US have taken steps to engage new constituencies in municipal elections. (a) Do you support allowing non-citizens with legal status the right to vote in municipal elections? (b) Do you support allowing 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in municipal elections?

**While I would support the idea in principle, it should be remembered that such legislation would require a home rule petition, and be passed by both Houses of the Legislature in sufficient numbers to override a veto by the governor. Furthermore, even if passes non-citizens would be legally barred from voting in State or federal elections, and efforts would have to be made to prevent mistaken voting, which would permanently bar citizenship to those with legal status.**

**I do not believe that in contemporary American culture, most 16-and 17-year olds possess the emotional maturity (and intellectual independence) for voting. As an aside, it should be remembered that (exclusive of college-educated white women) a majority of white millennials voted for Donald Trump in 2016.**

4. Sixteen of the twenty-five largest cities in the United States have term limits for the office of the mayor. Term limits for executive office help deter the over-centralization of power. Would you support changing the city charter to impose term limits for the office in Boston?

**No. Elected officials should be the result of decisions by the voters; furthermore long-serving and accountable elected officials develop expertise that creates checks against non-elected (in particular non-elected corporate) power.**

5. Elections are a central component of democratic accountability. Do you support keeping the City Council's current two-year terms instead of shifting to four-year terms?

**Yes**

**(J) Additional Comments**

*(Use this space to make any final comments you deem important for progressive voters assessing your candidacy.)*