

## Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Please submit completed questionnaires by Saturday, May 4.

Name: David Halbert  
Office Sought: Boston City Council At-large  
Website: [www.davidhalbert.com](http://www.davidhalbert.com)  
Facebook: [@VoteHalbert](https://www.facebook.com/VoteHalbert)  
Twitter: [@VoteHalbert](https://twitter.com/VoteHalbert)  
Instagram: [@VoteHalbert](https://www.instagram.com/VoteHalbert)

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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?
  - 1) Increasing transparency and access to government for regular citizens
  - 2) Addressing issues of structural inequality in government service and performance
  - 3) Establishing a multi-year municipal workforce development internship program connecting city departments and specific BPS high schools – with a goal of future expansion
  
2. What qualifies you to hold this office?
  - Nearly 15 years of professional experience in the public sector including service as a legislative aide for Boston City Councilors John Tobin and Sam Yoon.
  - Leadership roles with multiple Boston based civic organizations including East Boston Main Streets; the Young Professionals Network of the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts; and New Leaders Council – Boston chapter.
  - Civic leadership training through multiple programs such as the Commonwealth Seminar; the Initiative for Diversity in Civic Leadership; and the Emerging Leaders Program at UMass Boston.
  - Master of Public Administration degree from the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs at Northeastern University.
  
3. What do you see as the role of the City Council in our strong-mayor system?

The roles of the City Council are to generate new ideas and approaches to addressing policy issues; to deliver effective constituent service as advocates for city residents; to provide oversight and inquiry into municipal governance and operations; and to advise, and if necessary oppose, the Mayor on policy development and implementation – as an independent voice within city government.

## **(B) The Budget**

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

I would focus budget efforts on education and economic development. In particular in education I would want to work on how we address persistent inequities among schools in terms of student services and amenities; for economic development I would focus on increasing economic impact and vitality in commercial areas and communities that have consistently struggled to thrive.

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 legislation to enable line-item changes within the city budget. Further I would advocate for a more robust City Council budget staff, along with changes in the budget development process, enabling a shift to a budget process that more closely resembles the state budget process – with both the legislative and executive branches creating budgets reflecting perspective and prerogatives, and then reconciling them.

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?

Institutions governed by PILOT agreements, particularly in higher education, should have property assessed on a regular schedule, so accurate valuations can be made.

The “community benefits” portion of PILOT agreements should set a uniform standard and set of expectations for all.

PILOT agreements should be used as a tool to incentivize institutions to procure goods and services from Boston-based vendors – focusing on small businesses, particularly those that are woman and/or minority-owned. One option would be to give a bonus for such purchases.

An example would be \$1.25 credited towards a PILOT amount for every dollar spent at a verified small business; with more given for M/WBE vendors. This would be capped at a certain amount, so as not to preclude the City from generating direct revenue from PILOTs,

while also injecting capital into small businesses that would then circulate throughout communities and generate new revenue streams for the city.

**(C) Education**

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

Access to adequate financial resources for all schools as determined in a manner that truly incorporates faculty/staff, parent, and administration input and priorities.  
Increasing effective communication/transparency in BPS administration decision making processes.

Providing universal access to necessary student support and community based wraparound services, such as nurses in all schools, trauma/violence intervention, and residential support services for students encountering homelessness.

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?

I would seek rigorous oversight of any and all plans related to the BuildBPS project. This would include, but not be limited to, public presentation of potential, viable alternatives to immediate school closures; dedicated plans for utilization of funds secured through the sale of BPS properties – reached via a community centered process of identifying needs beginning with the impacted community; regular reporting on the status of the program via easily accessible narratives and project updates; and ongoing independent auditing of program operations and progress towards goals.

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?

The decision making process of BPS would be vastly improved by making changes to empower stakeholders – particularly parents and other city residents – by bringing back elected positions to the School Committee. I would advocate for a 7-person hybrid system, with some members appointed and others directly elected.

I would push for the new makeup to be: 2 members appointed by the Mayor (with one being the student member, who would remain directly selected by BPS students); 2 appointed by the City Council, 1 by the Council President and the Education Chair (or their designee) as the other; the final 3 seats would be directly elected by Boston voters, with new School Committee districts corresponding to combinations of City Council districts 1-

3, 4-6, & 7-9 – as each of these districts has at least one of the top 4 BPS population centers.

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

I would advocate for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills development, such as coding, to be made universally available to all students. I would also push to have ISEE prep courses be more widely available for students, as a component of addressing the glaring inequality in access to and representation in BPS exam schools. For older students I would work to help establish life skills courses outside of school to better prepare them for the needs and pressures of adulthood. I would also work to ensure that these programs were delivered in culturally competent and linguistically inclusive ways.

#### **(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. I would confer with Boston's Corporation Counsel, in addition to specialists in immigration and civil liberties law, to determine the full extent of the ability to separate such data from one another.

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?

Yes

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

I believe that the opioid crisis demands even greater collaboration between multiple actors on a continuum of care, including the city, healthcare providers, public safety, and community groups. It is only by addressing the issue in a multi-disciplinary fashion, engaging with those battling addiction at the various points of their journey, that we will

approach anything close to a solution. This also means advocating for increased resources to provide treatment and services for those who are addicted. In addition, more support needs to be provided for programs and services – like the city sharps recovery team – to increase their impact and efficacy in protecting communities from harm.

**(E) Transportation**

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

- Increased adoption of proven ideas, like true bus rapid transit, that can be brought to underserved communities as a means of getting cars off the road.
- Promoting non-automotive transit options like bikes by increasing access, creating safer passageways for riders, and working to create vibrant neighborhood focused commercial districts that are easily traversed by both bicycle and pedestrians.
- Working with members of the Boston State House delegation to arrest increases in fares for the MBTA by seeking alternative revenue generation models which leverage presently held MBTA assets to their fullest extent.

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

Yes

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?

I would work to ensure full funding and adoption of the provisions of the program. I would also demand that community play an active and vital role as a co-equal partner in the development and implementation of the program guidelines and approaches for Boston.

**(F) Environment**

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

Increased access to and utilization of mass transit.

Creating plans to address climate change in a manner that is sustainable and also takes special care to protect vulnerable environmental justice communities.

Working to source city goods and services from sustainable vendors whenever possible.

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?

I would seek to ensure that communities of color, which are often environmental justice communities, are at the table as early as possible when discussing and developing plans to address climate change. I would also work to ensure that, as climate change plans are put into place, a required component of the process is to examine how they may impact communities from a standpoint of increasing land costs/value and accelerating displacement and gentrification. I would also push for this to be a mandatory metric in evaluating any such plans.

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?

I would advocate for the proliferation of multiple housing types within the city, to provide residents with numerous options that would best suit them at different stages of life. I believe that any and all reasonable options to control rental prices, through measures such as rent control, must be on the table for serious discussion in order to create a workable solution. I believe that development that has increased density cannot be dismissed out of hand by communities. I think that homebuying models – like co-ops – should be more widely promoted as a possible solution for affordable homeownership and equity building. I also believe that senior citizens should be able to remain in their homes without fear of harassment, and that a municipal “do not bother” list should be created for those who are tired of constantly being hounded by developers.

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?

a) I do support increasing the IDP percentage. I believe that the increased amount should be developed through robust discussion and consensus building between the city, IDP advocates, community members, and representatives of the development community.

b) Yes

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?

a) My concern with the structure of the BPDA, dating back to its time as the BRA, is that there is too much concentrated power in such an agency. I believe that, in an effort to promote operational efficiency, too much control was ceded to the staff, leadership and Mayor's office in terms of direct influence on design of the cityscape. In this communities have expressed frustration and a core belief that their concerns are given lip service at best. I would love to see more integration of community groups into leadership and decision making, at an earlier stage.

b) Yes

## **(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?

I would promote increasing access to home ownership programs and capital to allow lower income members of the community to become homeowners and use these homes to build equity and intergenerational wealth – with a particular focus on communities of color across the city. This should be paired with a parallel program created to transition renters into homes successfully.

I would also push to create universal, publicly funded K0 & K1 classrooms across the city. This will significantly impact the ability of parents and caregivers to return to the workforce more quickly and reduce the burden of paying out-of-pocket for childcare, which can be financially crippling for many.

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 advocate for a full review of city procurement efforts in conjunction with a strategic development conversation examining the root causes of MBE's difficulty with securing city contracts. Depending on the outcome of this review I would push to have city procurement practices amended to ensure that MBE's could fairly compete and have a legitimate shot at receiving business from the city. I would also work to ensure that a regular report on the status of this effort was made publicly available so that necessary adjustments could be made in a timely fashion.

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

I would work to increase access to affordable housing designated for artists in areas across the city. I would also seek to increase the amount of support provided to artists in the form of more dedicated spaces for public art and performance, so that more of the public could be exposed to their art and support them financially

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?

I would seek to impose firm limits on the number of market rate units that any rental properties developed in these zones could contain, with a focus being on increasing the

overall stock of affordable units in circulation. I would also push for homes/condos for sale to be offered at significantly below market value as a pathway to homeownership for those that otherwise may be precluded due to limited finances rather than an inability to pay.

**(I) Democracy**

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

I would work to bring City Council meetings out of City Hall and into communities, beginning with one in each Council District over a 2 year term, and with a goal of having one in every Ward over a 2 year term. These meetings would take place in the evening in order to increase the number of everyday citizens who could attend, participate, and ask direct questions when applicable.

I would also like to create a municipal budget tour where the full budget is taken directly to communities for a thorough public description and inquiry – rather than cherry picking neighborhood specific highlights. The long term goal would be to have this tour take place prior to the finalization of the budget so that it can be developed in a genuine participatory process.

I would also work to establish a program connecting BPS high schools to city agencies to create 4-year internship opportunities which would enable graduates to walk out of graduation and into potential career opportunities with the city. This would create a pipeline of talent that will help meet municipal employment needs while also addressing often stated concerns about issues of diversity within the Boston workforce – particularly as these individuals progress into more senior and managerial roles in their careers and can open doors for others.

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

Yes

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?

a) Yes

b) I think the age for municipal voting should be lowered to 17

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?

Yes, but only if City Councilors were also term-limited as well, though the limits could be different.

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**

I am a progressive in action as well as in words. Whether standing on a picket line with striking labor workers, helping to provide leadership and training opportunities for younger progressive activists and leaders, or supporting progressive candidates like Ayanna Pressley, Lydia Edwards, and Maura Healey – even in the face of opposition from those who are close to me, I proudly stand by my values and let them guide me.

As strongly as I hold my core beliefs though, I never let them prevent me from listening to other points of view. In order to truly advance a progressive agenda I believe that it is critical that we as a community do our best to engage and understand where others are coming from. Not so that we can doubt or question our beliefs, but rather so that we can develop effective strategies to allow those who are not aligned with our points of view to genuinely hear what we are saying and why we believe what we do. Whether on issues of equity, inclusion, diversity, or a host of other value related conversations, I believe this is how we truly make progress in the larger world.

It is this approach, openness rooted in deeply held core beliefs, which will make me a successful advocate for progressive causes across all of Boston's neighborhoods – with your support.