

## **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?**

If reelected, my top three priorities will continue to be economic mobility, racial equity, and climate justice.

**2. What qualifies you to hold this office?**

I have been proud to serve on the Boston City Council for 6 years, during which I have used my office to drive bold, progressive action at the local level. My legislative accomplishments of successful ordinances that I have authored or coauthored encompass: paid parental leave, healthcare equity prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity, language access, increasing city residents' renewable energy sourcing in the default electricity contract, short term rental regulations to close corporate loopholes and protect housing stock, procurement reform to require equity in opportunity for city contracting for businesses owned by people of color, women, and Boston residents, a ban on single-use plastic bags, requirements to prepare for reprecincting, and food justice standards for Boston Public Schools and City food purchasing.

Prior to my tenure on the Council, I served as a Rappaport Fellow in Law and Public Policy under Mayor Tom Menino. I later served as statewide Constituency Director in the U.S. Senate campaign of my former law professor, Elizabeth Warren. I speak Mandarin and Spanish. I live in Roslindale with my husband and two young sons.

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

In my first three terms on the City Council, I've used my platform to further accessibility, transparency, and community engagement in city leadership. In partnership with the community, I hope to legislate innovative, data-driven, progressive solutions that increase equity and opportunity for all in Boston, and especially those who historically have been excluded from policy making. I view the role of the Council as that of community partners in City Hall entrusted with proposing neighborhood driven solutions and innovations to make Boston more inclusive, equitable, sustainable and just for all our workers and families.

**(B) The Budget**

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

I would like to see the City increase our investments in education, affordable housing, public transit, and climate resiliency. Additionally, I believe the city should ensure all of its spending advances a vision of equity which is why I co-sponsored the Equity in City of Boston Contracts Ordinance, on which the City Council recently held a follow-up hearing. Boston has to do better to ensure its spending is promoting our city's values.

**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?**

The City Council must be a strong partner to the administration in prioritizing our values through the spending of our city dollars. On the Council, I was proud to partner with former Councilor, now Congresswoman, Ayanna Pressley, and now Councilor Kim Janey, in passing the Supplier Diversity and Equity in Contracting Ordinance. This ordinance set up more proactive requirements for the city to align our public spending with our policy goals to reduce income inequality and build wealth locally, supporting businesses owned by people of color, women, and Boston residents. By taking steps like the ones in this legislation, mandating that the city provide data on where exactly our tax dollars are going, the City Council is able to play a more active role in influencing our budget, and I will use my platform if re-elected to continue to push for measures along this vein.

**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?**

Our large institutions should act as partners to the city and especially to the neighborhoods they occupy and impact most. I will push for full compliance with the City

of Boston PILOT Task Force's recommended payment levels and support bringing stakeholders back to the table for an updated agreement that includes assessments reflecting today's land values, especially as institutions look to expand in our neighborhoods. It is only through continuing to push for implementation of the Task Force's recommendations that we can move toward a more sustainable funding system that takes into account both the costs of providing services for exempt properties while also recognizing the unique value non-profits bring to Boston residents through the services they deliver. Additionally, the city should work to ensure that the state, the largest landowner in Boston, is paying its fair share in PILOT payments.

### **(C) Education**

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

Quality education includes not just academic performance in Mathematics, English language arts, and Science, but also character-building, workforce preparation, developing teamwork skills, and nurturing students' curiosity and interests beyond the limited focus of what a standardized test can measure. On the City Council, I will prioritize early education (fully funded BPS seats for every 3 and 4 year old in Boston, expanding and improving vocational and technical education at Boston's only vocational school Madison Park, and ensuring all students have access to appropriate mental health and trauma supports.

**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?**

All children in Boston deserve access to high-quality education, and our public schools are currently underfunded, especially in areas that serve primarily low-income students and students of color. With BuildBPS, we have an opportunity to promote equity and positive learning outcomes in these and all BPS schools. On the Council, I will continue to use my position to push for accountability, transparency, and community participation. In most cases, the sale of City real estate assets requires Council approval, so there is a role for the City Council to require public hearings and information rather than just rubber stamping the order. I have pushed for this type of process in my role as Chair of the Planning, Development and Transportation Committee, and will continue to do so.

**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?**

With last week's culmination of the superintendent search process, we continue to see that parents, teachers, students, and neighborhood leaders need to have increased involvement in and oversight of major BPS decisions, and the current structure does not provide that accountability. We should explore all possible options to provide tools for increased involvement, and that includes taking a look at the structure of our school committee. The elected City Council should also be a voice that voters need to express discontentment and increase involvement with school decisions. I am open to a hybrid school committee with elected and appointed members and believe the student member should have a full vote. I am also open to discussing other structures, but I remain concerned about the possibility of an elected school committee that may not truly represent Boston's public school students' and families' needs given the reality of campaign finance and that not every registered voter may believe he or she has a stake in fully funding our schools relative to other city services. Other jurisdictions and Boston's past experience have shown cautionary examples of what can happen when politics becomes infused into school committees, so I would want to discuss specifics of how the elections and campaign finance would work.

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

Our youth need guaranteed access to opportunity and an expansion of their classrooms to encompass the whole city. We need fully funded youth summer jobs for students from ages 14-18, and an expansion of job and internship opportunities throughout the school year. My office has also released a Boston Youth Transportation Project report based on interviews, focus groups and online surveys of nearly 300 Boston youth highlighting the major barriers they face to accessing opportunity because of transportation challenges. I am glad that BPS has since announced an expansion of the MBTA pass program to include all 7th-12th graders, not just those who live more than 2 miles from their school, but these passes should be active in the summer months outside the school year as well. Finally, in general we need more transparency about how youth development funding is allocated (much of it through BPD) and whether the organizations receiving funding are achieving outcomes and goals.

**(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. I led the effort to call for hearings on this subject and continue to work on how to advance this legislation.

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

Yes. I support the data-driven policies that DA Rollins has advanced and the memo laying out her priorities based on comparative research and analysis. The work that my colleagues and I at the city level are doing can't be effective without stability for our families, so we need to support the transformation in our criminal justice system that our DA Rollins is leading to decriminalize poverty, mental illness, and addiction.

- 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. The Council needs to continue monitoring the Boston Trust Act implementation and adjust the legislation as required to maintain trust with all our residents.

- 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?**

The opioid crisis is one of the most pressing issues facing us in public health today. We need to be doing everything we can to keep people alive while also working to get them into treatment and expand treatment on demand. For too long, law enforcement has been the only response, and we've seen the tragic results of decades of failed policy. I support the work of Boston Healthcare for the Homeless to continue to offer treatment at their Supportive Place for Observation and Treatment. I also believe Boston could join other cities in directly pursuing legal action against pharmaceutical companies responsible for pushing irresponsible prescriptions of opioids. Finally, we should continue to expand access to NARCAN and training to treat overdoses.

## **(E) Transportation**

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

In order to mitigate the effects of climate change and drastically increase our public transit ridership, Boston must set the goal of fare free public transportation. We are running out of time to reduce Boston's carbon footprint, and our economy loses money

every day to our traffic woes. Fare free transit would guarantee the right of public mobility for all, and incentivize current drivers who are able to make the switch to do so. In line with this priority, Councilor Kim Janey and I are working to host a hearing on the possibility of creating a fare-free 28 bus route along Blue Hill Avenue, an important economic corridor whose residents would face equity challenges if the planned cashless bus fare system is introduced. In the short term, we must build out a connected, protected bicycle infrastructure network; create separated bus lanes, signal prioritization and other improvements to get closer to bus-rapid transit; immediately achieve commuter rail fare equity and stop punishing residents of neighborhoods not served by subway service with unjust expensive fare zone pricing; implement a low-income fare for the MBTA (including an immediate removal of the cash penalty charging higher fares for riders paying cash) and commit to fare-capping and free fares for seniors and students; review citywide signal timing to provide safer crossing times for pedestrians; prioritize safe, active transportation infrastructure with every road resurfacing project; and implement smarter resident parking management by moving away from unlimited free parking permits.

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

Yes! This is the biggest step we could take for climate justice and economic mobility across the region.

**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?**

As a city, we must increase the safety and availability of alternative transportation options for all. We have not kept pace with other cities in our region or across the country with investments in and advocacy for protected bike lanes. We must greatly increase the availability of protected bike lanes, and must ensure this is done with an equity lens so that communities of color, historically underserved by public transit as well as hardest hit by the effects of climate change due to failures in policy, will have equitable access. As Chair of the Planning, Development, and Transportation Committee I have demonstrated and advocated for safety measures for alternative modes of transportation. We also need the appropriate crash data to understand the reality of today's infrastructure, and Boston currently does not report the way that other municipalities do.

**(F) Environment**

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

We must 1) add stricter requirements for resiliency in new development (including passage of the Local Wetlands Protection Ordinance that I filed in partnership with Councilor O'Malley); 2) we must take every possible step to reduce traffic and congestion (and the emissions that it causes) including congestion pricing, parking reform, expansion of public transit, electrification (including of the municipal fleet and all school buses) and generally supporting walkable neighborhoods with jobs and amenities in every neighborhood to reduce the need to travel long distances; and 3) we must rethink our food systems and support local economies and production to keep jobs here while eliminating our dependence on multinational food corporations that are polluting our air and water and pushing for unhealthy food policy standards.

**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?**

The impacts of climate change are already concentrated on communities of color and those who contributed least to the problem. On the City Council, I have advocated for new public buildings, including affordable housing units, to be required to meet net-zero carbon emissions standards or passive house standards. Investments in public transportation, with the prioritization of certain MBTA bus routes as fare-free routes, would also have an equity impact.

**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?**

Boston needs a greater supply of affordable housing, and specifically a greater supply of family - or multi-bedroom unit - housing. We also need to increase funding to support

affordable housing such as increasing Inclusionary Development requirement and linkage levels, and to increase home ownership opportunities, not just rentals, so that families can build wealth and the city can begin to close wealth gaps. Finally, we need to define affordability not with regional Area Median Income numbers that give a false sense of affordability but at levels that Boston residents can actually afford.

- 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 support increasing this number to 20%, matching the requirements in Cambridge and Somerville.

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) I am greatly concerned about the current operations of the BPDA. The current structure of the BPDA does not create space for public accountability. As an agency not funded by the city, the BPDA is not subject to City Council oversight in the same way that city agencies are. Additionally, the agency has repeatedly prioritized the near term, in the form of immediate property tax gains, and not long-term land use priorities for future generations.

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?**

The factor most closely linked to economic mobility is the average commute time to work from a resident's neighborhood, so we must continue to move toward reliable, convenient, fare-free public transportation. We must also take every action to align City spending with steps to reduce income inequality and the racial wealth gap. Based on reporting required from the Equity in City Contracting ordinance that then-Councilor Pressley and I coauthored, currently less than 1% of our City contracting dollars go to businesses of color. This is unacceptable, and we can take steps to make contract sizes more accessible, provide transparency on what types of contracts are available on what schedule, and support local business owners looking to expand and bid on city contracts. We also need to boost home ownership opportunities for residents throughout the city and especially in communities of color.

- 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. On the City Council, I've filed an Ordinance for Fair Work Week standards for employees of city contractors. This legislation would require any business that contracts with the city to provide their employees with predictable schedules, guaranteed hours, and fair benefits. I invite you to join our working session on May 20th at 3pm to see us in action!

- 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?**

Sadly we learned at a recent hearing that Councilor Kim Janey and I called that this 0.72% figure was a mistake, and the actual number was 0.55%. On the Council, equity in access to city contracts has been one of my priorities. My Equity in Opportunity for City Contracting Ordinance, passed in December 2017, reformed Boston's procurement process to align City spending with supplier diversity to support economic mobility, racial equity, and transparency. I will continue to host hearings on this topic and request the quarterly reports due to the Council (since the ordinance passed in December 2017, we have only received one full report in November 2018 and an update to the numbers in May 2019). We must also push to break down contract sizes where feasible so that new and local businesses can bid on more accessible contracts. Finally, we need to also track the data on applicants and who was rejected so we understand how many businesses owned by people of color are applying but not being chosen. And we need to provide better feedback to those who were not selected to improve their understanding of the process for next time.

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

On the Council, I've advocated for artists as workers with a vital role to play in our economy. My Acoustic on Main Ordinance, passed in December 2016, removed barriers for small businesses to host acoustic live entertainment by eliminating licenses, paperwork, and fees, thereby helping businesses increase foot traffic while showcasing artists and creating additional opportunities for performers to be paid for and showcase their talents. Artists deserve to be paid livable wages and have access to housing that is as safe and affordable.

**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 filed corporate tax break transparency legislation at the Council because residents should have full knowledge of the benefits when much-needed tax revenue is given away. The legislation would create a requirement for the city to publish an online database of tax break agreements and compliance reports, including the number of jobs promised to Boston and the number ultimately created. It also makes a requirement that jobs created are full-time, with benefits, and requires clawbacks for the City to recoup tax revenue if corporations do not hold up their end of the bargain.

**(I) Democracy**

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

I authored and filed an ordinance to create a way for residents to directly shape the Council agenda through the right of free petition, which would have guaranteed that the Council would hold a hearing on any topic of a petition signed by 500 residents. Data shows that the civic engagement of signing a petition increases the likelihood that someone will register to vote and actually vote in the next election. And we make better policy when all voices are heard. Unfortunately this ordinance was voted down by a supermajority of the Council. Still, I believe that every single resident of Boston has a role to play in making our city more equitable and more livable for all. Expanding civic engagement has been my fundamental priority spanning back to my time focusing on community outreach on Senator Warren's first campaign and before that. I've worked in partnership with the Massachusetts Democratic Party to create the first-ever millennial initiative, and hosted the annual Chinatown Banquet to raise funds for a full-time millennial and student organizer for the party. I've pushed for transparency at City Hall, and publish weekly Council Notes to share exactly what the Council is doing each week. This Spring, I've been hosting a Civic Engagement Skills Series, the first of which took place at Black Market in Dudley Square, to bring City Hall into traditionally underserved neighborhoods and work to provide tools for access and participation to every Boston community.

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

Yes, and I co-sponsored legislation to require this in partnership with Councilor Josh Zakim.

**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?**

Yes and yes.

**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?**

I am open to this discussion but believe there has to be a balance between deterring over-centralization and allowing for the development of institutional expertise.

**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. On the City Council, I was the sole vote against the expansion of the current term limits in 2017 and one of two votes against it this year, because I believe a two-year term creates the most accountability. Moving to a four-year term would increase the barriers to running for local office for new candidates, doubling the number of times an incumbent can solicit annual contributions under our current campaign finance system which allows donations each year rather than each campaign cycle. This would only increase the disparity in resources between an incumbent and first time candidate. Four-year terms would also generally cut in half the number of chances to challenge incumbents. The current composition of our Council—the most diverse in Boston's history—only came about because of successful challenges in the non-Mayoral election years, when turnout was concentrated on the Council races.

**(J) Additional Comments**

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

In my three terms representing all Boston residents, I have worked to highlight the platform and power that the City Council can exercise when fully accessible and accountable to residents. From groundbreaking legislation to a more representative Council, the successes have been due to community partnership. These gains for progressive momentum in Boston are important not just for local residents, but for cities across the country that need examples of progressive leadership at a time of great challenge in our politics and a vacuum of leadership at other levels. This year's elections are crucial to continuing to build toward a progressive majority on the Council. I thank you for your activism and thank you for your consideration!