

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?

Addressing inequities in the distribution of Boston's resources, strengthening the Trust Act, and working to address our growing economic inequality and housing crisis.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I believe our government works best when it includes a diversity of voices. At this very moment the Boston City Council has no men of color, and nobody from the Latinx community in a city where 1 in 5 Bostonians are Latinx, and nearly every inequity affects men of color at a disproportional rate.

I am a product of Boston Public Schools, I am the son of a BPS teacher, whose Union benefits provided my healthcare. I was taught from a very early age that no one of us is as effective as all of us and that we all share in a communal responsibility to improve the lives of others. I made a decision to attend law school to become a Public Defender because I felt it was my duty to fight against the scourge of mass incarceration and laws that were created and implemented in ways that disparately affected people of color and women while criminalizing poverty, mental illness, and addiction.

I have experience working in partnership with our most disenfranchised populations and advocating successfully in systems heavily stacked against them. As a Public Defender I fought everyday against systems that attempted to strip the humanity from my clients. In that work I was able to help stabilize and connect people to the resources necessary to give them a chance to break cycles. I loved that work but was confronted with the limitations that role had making change at the macro level. It is that understanding that compelled me to run.

I believe the only way to create a Boston that works for all of us is to work in partnership with community on holistic solutions that address the intersections of poverty, housing, education, and environment and to address the policies that cause harm to so many directly at their root. I believe my professional and personal experiences have uniquely prepared me for this role.

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

I believe that the Boston City Council has two roles. One is to push progressive and holistic policy that affects issues squarely within their control such as the Trust Act. I believe their second role is to use the position to lift up the voices of others and to advocate for issues that may not be in their direct control but by their pressure may be addressed by the State House or the Mayor. District City Councilors are the closest to the people and I believe it is always their responsibility to ensure that city government is always responsive to our residents and that city services are being distributed equitably.

(B) The Budget

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

My campaign is focused closing barriers to opportunity with a focus on the impact that rising income equality has on our communities. My focus will be on ensuring that our schools are fully funded, that as a City we prioritize affordable housing, taking preventative approach to public safety as opposed to a reactive approach and ensuring that the economic prosperity some experience in Boston reaches us all by ensuring that legislation like Invest in Boston is fully implemented.

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?

Yes. Additionally, I would support the City Council being able to propose budget items and create its own budget proposal for the City much like the state legislature does. Currently the City Council can only react to the Mayor's budget and only has the ability to reject the budget, not amend it.

That being said I believe that the City Council does indeed hold power of the budget that as a body it rarely uses. A simple majority of the Boston City Council can reject the budget and force the Mayor to amend the budget. As a member of the Council I intend to work closely with my colleagues so that when needed such a majority can stand together on budget related issues.

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?

Currently about 50% of the land mass in Boston is untaxed which causes an undue burden on the remaining 50% to pay for the services of the 100%. Our colleges and hospitals have to pay their fair share and I find it unacceptable that more than \$60 million of the requested PILOT goes unpaid. As a City Councilor I intend to both champion this issue and work to find ways to ensure payment which include but are not limited to supporting state legislation that changes how PILOT funds are collected.

(C) Education

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

First and foremost we must fully fund ALL of our public schools. Asking our schools to do more with less is not a recipe for success. Secondly, we must work to lower the number of students per teacher, have arts, STEM and physical education as a part of all students school experience and not just some. Lastly we must recruit and support teachers that look like and come from the same communities our students come from.

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 could not support the premise of this question more. ALL school related decisions should be driven by school quality and equity and be transparent. As the City Councilor for District 5 I will work with the school communities in District 5 to ensure they are heard and that we hold the administration and School Committee to those values.

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?

I do not believe the school committee should continue to operate as currently structured. I believe that as it is currently structured it does not provide the independence, transparency, and accountability that our students deserve. My ideal structure would be

formed through partnership with parents, teachers, and students. Whether that be in the form of an elected, hybrid, or appointed school committee with a new selection method, is not as important to me as ensuring that whatever form it takes is one that provides independence, transparency, and accountability and whose structure is molded by those key stakeholders.

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

I am an advocate for extended day and after school enrichment so that students can have access to the arts, theater, music, and dance. As a former youth sports coach I know the power of sports to teach life skills and will advocate for physical education and sports as well.

(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. One step I intend to take as a Councilor is investigating in what ways and to what extent BRIC and ICE are currently being provided information and access to BPD's databases so that we can better address the comingling of data. That transparency is crucial to addressing the issue as effectively as possible.

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 have worked with those addicted to opiates and have experienced both the tragedy of losing someone to overdose and the joy of someone successfully stabilizing and effectively addressing their addiction. I have learned that access to treatment, safe housing, and healthcare greatly improves the success of someone struggling with addiction. I would seek to better fund treatment, one example is increasing the public knowledge and access to Vivitrol. A medicine that truly benefitted and stabilized the vast majority of my clients who both had access to and wanted to use it. The Globe wrote an article, **How addiction treatment falls short, and what is being done about it**, that discussed its effectiveness and underuse.

I also support safe injection sites. Both because studies show that it saves lives and helps people begin treatment and because it lessens to a great degree the amount of needles discarded into the community where they can pose a safety risk to residents.

(E) Transportation

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

First and foremost all modes of transportation including, biking, walking, public transit and personal vehicles must be considered and taken onto account whenever we do transportation planning for our City. Additionally we must organize around improvements to the MBTA as I believe District 5 residents are the victims of severe public transit inequity.

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 believe in traffic calming through design as an effective method of achieving these goals. Traffic calming done correctly creates a set of check and balances that compel those at the wheel to drive slowly and carefully. I also fully support the creation of more bike lanes and more importantly making sure that bike lanes are interconnected throughout the city to better promote rider safety.

(F) Environment

1. What are your top three priorities for making Boston a more environmentally sustainable city? Following Watertown's example by passing a zoning ordinance requiring new commercial construction, as well as renovations of existing buildings that are more than 10,000 square feet, to have solar collectors, continuing the work of lowering Boston's carbon footprint, and improving public and sustainable modes of transportation so that those forms of transportation become more accessible and financially feasible.
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 will use my office to lead on this issue by hold and supporting council hearings, community meeting and actions and by making sure that the voices of those most impacted by this issue are heard and have a voice in all planning.

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 support steps like increasing linkage fees, a proposed vacancy tax on commercial and residential properties, and any other proposal shown to effectively create and preserve affordable housing for seniors, families, and young adults.

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?

I would support 20% or more. The lack of affordable housing in Boston has hit crisis levels and we must approach this issue as a crisis. Yes, I believe that the affordable housing units should be built on site

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?

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?

One way is to work to ensure that the Invest in Boston legislation is fully implemented which, since its passage in 2013, has not been. This legislation forces that all banks that want to participate in any of the over 1 billion dollars in banking business generated by the City disclose their banking practices in Boston, from the number of home loans they generate, the number of small business loans they generate, how many Bostonians they hire and other criteria. Once that information is disclosed it will be used to decide who gets the City's banking business.

Additionally, the Globe recently reported that less than 1 percent of over \$600 million in contracting services by the City went to businesses owned by women and / or people of color. This is unacceptable and as a City Councilor I will take this issue head on to make sure that all of Boston benefits from this over \$600 Million dollars of economic infusion that as of now is not supporting women and people 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

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, and I support Councilor Janey's proposed ordinance on this matter.

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?

This is an issue I raise on the trail. It is unacceptable and a prime example of institutional racism and patriarchy. It would be a priority of mine to address this and believe one solution may be the passage of an ordinance similar to the Invest in Boston Act that passed in 2013 and created a system in which banks that the city conducts business with must provide the city with their specific data regarding whether they lend to small businesses and qualified home buyers, refinance loans, lend to development projects, hire Bostonians and have a plan to deal with the rising foreclosure rates. The banks that do best by those markers received our deposits.

In this case we would be seeking different markers, when these contracts are given out or bid upon, the city would require data regarding the diversity of the workforce of that company, both race and gender, the percentage of Boston residents who work for that business as well as all data regarding the diversity of the ownership and management positions at those companies. This system would provide the city the tools to reward companies that hire Bostonians and companies that are better reflective of the diversity of the city. We must also do a better job making the process to apply for city contracts less convoluted and more accessible to a wider range of companies to increase the pool of eligible bidders.

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

I would advocate for a closer relationship between our cultural institutions and our communities. Especially communities that do not have adequate access to those institutions and that have populations that are historically and currently not adequately

represented or served by those institutions. I also support funding the creation of more public art, such as murals.

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 believe it is imperative that these designated zones be done in partnership with the communities in which they are designated. I also believe that any development in those communities should be focused on the creation of affordable housing.

(I) Democracy

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

I support same day registration and automatic registration when residents come of age. I also support giving documented residents the right to vote in municipal elections and having landlords provide voting registration forms with their leases. I believe participation is directly correlated to an individual's trust in government and whether that individual believes they matter and are being seen by that government. On a personal level I will do all in my power to make sure that voices not currently engaged are brought into the conversation and that they trust that they are indeed being heard.

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?

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 truly believe that voters should and do have final say in who holds office through elections and do not support imposing term limits, however I do believe that the over-

centralization of power is undemocratic and would support looking at other ways the city charter could be amended to address the problem of over-centralization.

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, as someone who challenged an incumbent, I understand the difficulty of mounting a challenge against an incumbent who has steadily raised money over their tenure and has such a large financial advantage. Increasing the term to four years only compounds that problem and by doing so dissuades others from challenging incumbents.

(J) Additional Comments

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