

Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire

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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?

- A. Ensuring that every child in Boston has access to a high quality education.**
- B. Enhancing the quality of life for residents of Hyde Park, Mattapan, Readville, and Roslindale through effective constituent services and proactive community planning.**
- C. Working with neighbors to make our neighborhoods healthier and safer places to live, work, raise a family, and retire.**

1. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I have spent my life dedicated to improving my community and the city where I am raising my 6 children. My experience is deeply rooted in community engagement and advocacy. As an education advocate and parent organizer, I have fought to give our schools the funding and services they deserve, serving as School Parent Council Chair and School Site Council Chair for both the Roosevelt and O'Bryant Schools and helping to resurrect the Citywide Parent Council. Through my work on the City Council, I have the experience and knowledge to deliver for our residents here in District 5.

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

The main statutory responsibility is to review and vote on the annual City budget, however, I see the role of the City Council being so much more. As City Councilor, I will use my elected office as a bully pulpit to author and pass legislation that pushes for investments our schools, keeps our streets safe, protects our seniors and those on fixed incomes, creates practical solutions to our traffic and transportation challenges, and gives residents a stronger voice in the development process.

(B) The Budget

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

Some of my budgetary priorities include, advocating for Boston Public Schools to have full-time Social/ Emotional and Mental Health staffers and full-time Guidance Counselors in each school, City-funded professional development for Boston Police Department in dealing with mental health crisis calls, increasing annual funding for the BCYF summer jobs link program, and investing in modernizing City transportation infrastructure to address our unacceptable traffic/transportation challenges.

1. 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 support measures to further empower the City Council in the budgeting process. An important starting point is fully engaging in the current process and working collaboratively with other members to set clear priorities to create a strong, united voice on certain priorities.

1. 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?

The current status of P.I.L.O.T. is unacceptable. I support reconvening a P.I.L.O.T. Task Force and examining the cost of reassessing property values of non-profit institutions in the City of Boston. Boston's large institutions must be held accountable to pay their fair share.

(C) Education

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

A. Prioritizing funding to close the achievement gap and end the opportunity divide.

B. Working to provide adequate resources and partnerships so that all schools can offer excellence for families

C. Having language access in all our BPS and central office supports so all families can communicate with trust and ease.

1. 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?

As a BPS parent and family advocate, School Site Council Chair, and Citywide Parent Council Representative, I am optimistic about the BuildBPS plan. As a system, it is critical that we have a comprehensive plan to address BPS's crumbling facilities. Every BPS student deserves to be educated in a modern, top-notch facility.

1. 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 independence of the Boston School Committee is critically important. I would support measures and look at structural changes that would achieve this goal.

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

When our schools are not able to provide adequate after-school enrichment programs or support systems, it is important that all our BCYF centers operate with the understanding of providing quality programs for all our young (and not so young people), including after-school and summer opportunities. Our transportation system needs to work more collaboratively with families so children have access and transportation to these programs. We also need to provide better communication and disbursement of current city funded programming that families would have access to.

(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?

Every day, members of law enforcement, community based-organizations, and public health partners work to ensure that every resident of Boston is safe and healthy. This is something I respect deeply. We must support a comprehensive public safety strategy that provides treatment and services to non-violent offenders and aggressively prosecutes those who traffic heroin and fentanyl, prey on our residents, and commit violent crimes.

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

I support the Trust Act. I attended those hearings and understand completely the goal and intention of this legislation. It allows people who are not citizens to feel comfortable to approach the BPD with any issues they may have in their lives. I witnessed the stories of women being exploited over their status because they were afraid of deportation. The BPD has made and kept a promise, a bridge has been built because of the Trust Act for the betterment of the people who suffer the most. I feel it is crucial that all residents feel safe approaching law enforcement when they need help. With that being said, the Boston Police Departments should be able to work collaboratively with any and all agencies to keep our city safe from violent offenders. Their overall focus should be community policing and keeping our communities safe and healthy. BPD should not be enforcing immigration regulations and everyone should feel confident to seek assistance from our police department.

1. 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 City Councilor, I look forward to working closely with community stakeholders and the law enforcement community to ensure that we have municipal policies that keep our neighborhoods safe. I look forward to working with experts to develop strategies that work best for every resident in District 5.

1. 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 has ravaged our communities and had a profound effect on so many families in Hyde Park, Mattapan, Readville, and Roslindale. As City Councilor, I look forward to collaborating with other elected officials, health service providers, and community-based organizations to create access to more recovery beds, support early intervention services, and create wrap-around services for both those struggling with addiction and their families. Furthermore, I support Mayor Walsh's initiative to reopen the Long Island bridge so we could build a world class campus facility. The opioid epidemic impacts our entire region, so we it is important for other municipalities to support such efforts -- both financially and with other resources.

(E) Transportation

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

A. Fighting for expanded access and frequency of rail and bus service into Boston's major commercial districts.

B. Lobbying state and federal government for more transportation funding.

C. Supporting investments in BRT through major commercial corridors throughout the district and Boston as a whole.

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

Yes.

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

I support bringing back late night T service and expanding access to public transit. The last attempt to do so was ineffective, so in restarting this service, it is critical that it is done in a manner that will be sustainable.

1. 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 City Councilor, I look forward to working with community stakeholders, transportation advocates, and industry experts to ensure that our communities are safer and healthier places for residents to travel and commute. My work in community-based advocacy has shown me the incredible importance of consensus building, and in this role, I will convene neighborhood leaders and experts to achieve our shared goals.

(F) Environment

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

A. The cost of retrofitting City-owned buildings to reduce energy usage and increase our renewable energy footprint is an enormous undertaking. As councilor, I will insist that the city reviews the cost to retrofit compared to a rebuild for the most cost effective solution. A striking example is our BPS facilities, over 55% have been built before WWII.

B. Creating a "sustainability agenda" in our Boston Public Schools to reduce waste, increase recycling and composting, and teach our youth life skills to make them more responsible adults.

C. Investing in critical resiliency programs to protect Boston from climate change and sea level rise.

1. 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?

Addressing climate change in Boston will continue to be a priority for the Administration and the City Council. Developing a comprehensive climate change plan and mitigation strategy is necessary to ensuring that every Bostonian can live in a healthy community. As City Councilor, I will have increased focus on issues that adversely

impact communities of color, and ensure that diverse communities are heard on mitigation planning.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes. Composting is important to making Boston more sustainable, and I would support piloting a program that is effective and addresses concerns about rodents.

(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?

Great schools, safe neighborhoods, access to economic mobility, and responsive and effective City services are the keys to a thriving City. As City Councilor, I will always support programs and policies that help us achieve these goals.

1. 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.

1. 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?

Currently, too much focus on development in Boston has been on one or two bedroom luxury units. As a mom working multiple jobs to support my family, I understand the need to create additional access to affordable units – especially for families and seniors. As City Councilor, I will play an active role in the development process to ensure seniors and those on fixed incomes can remain in our neighborhoods while creating additional units specifically for families.

1. 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.

1. 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?

All development should be done in a manner that is transparent and weighs the input of residents. As City Councilor, I will be a voice for residents to ensure that they have a real voice in the process and determining the future of their communities. The BPDA is currently an independent agency under the leadership of Brian Golden. Under Director Golden they have become more transparent and easier to work with regarding input. Although not a perfect organization, they are certainly moving in the right direction. I will continue to make certain that communication with our residents is a priority as your councilor.

(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?

As a single mom of 6 kids, I work three jobs to take care of my family, so I understand the financial challenges families face. Skyrocketing housing prices are driving working families out of Boston and

As a City, we must do more to connect every neighborhood with our thriving economic engine and districts (Longwood Medical Area, Financial District, and the Seaport), both economically and quite literally through transportation. Building partnerships between our Boston Public Schools and creating pathways for students to learn skills for a 21st century economy is important to give our youth the tools they need to achieve success.

1. 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. One of the three means of employment I have to support my family is as a waitress. I work for a boss who is incredibly generous on this front, and I believe that city contractors should have to follow the same policies.

1. 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. Currently, large out-of-city (and in many cases, out-of-state) corporations are dominating Boston's cannabis industry. Priority should be given to Boston residents who have proven themselves in our communities. As City Councilor, I will call on City regulators to dive deeper into licensing agreements to prevent shell corporations from forcing out community-based cannabis companies.

1. 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 more resources being focused on outreach to vendors so they are aware of available City contracts. Furthermore, we should be prioritizing this outreach to vendors who are Boston residents. There is nothing more frustrating than seeing an out-of-town contractor doing work that could have been done by a Boston resident.

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

Boston's art and cultural community is one of the top in the nation. Supporting a thriving arts scene not only makes Boston culturally richer, but it also stimulates economic growth. I support increasing the creation of and access to public art, creating more affordable units for our artist community, and working to connect with our world-class cultural institutions with our neighborhoods.

1. 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?

As previously mentioned, we need to be building more housing for working families. While affordable one- and two-bedroom units are great, there is a tremendous lack of access to 3+ bedroom affordable units. If development is happening in a neighborhood, it needs to benefit residents, not make it harder to remain in community.

(I) Democracy

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

As a past School Site Council Chair and Parent Council Chair at both the Roosevelt and O'Bryant Schools, I know how to engage communities and bring them into the decision-making process. Through my work in many community-based organizations, I have seen the power of engaging community members not usually part of the process. As a City, we can do more to engage diverse communities through creative outreach strategies. This means doing more outreach in multiple languages, engaging residents in their various cultural centers (churches, barber shops, youth sports leagues, etc.), holding regular district office hours, and being accessible to all. I look forward to taking my experience in community organizing to City Hall and bringing City Hall into our neighborhoods.

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

Yes.

1. 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?

I consider voting to be one of the most sacred duties we have as Americans. I think the most important question we face regarding elections is how do we get more Bostonians to participate in local elections. In the 2016 Presidential Election, 277,366 Bostonians voted. In the 2017 Municipal Election, only 109,034 voters turned out, and in the last non-Mayoral Municipal Election in 2015, only 50,833 people voted. Through more effective outreach and engagement, we can encourage more residents to participate in the electoral process. I also support extending early voting to all Municipal Elections. As a mother of 6 children, 3 who have already passed the age of 17, I know first hand that they were not responsible or engaged enough to make a qualified decision in this process, this age is just simply not mature enough to be empowered with these decisions.

1. 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

1. 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?

I am running for City Council, because I want to be a bold voice for District 5 – not to debate the length of City Council terms. It has become quite clear with the changes in the City Council just over the last 6 years that the voters voice is larger than any charter change the City of Boston could make

(J) Additional Comments

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