

# 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?

- **Boston Public Schools**
- **Public Health and Access to Mental Health Services**
- **Ending homelessness for families in Boston**

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

**I am running for re-election for Boston City Council At-Large to continue to give back to this city in which I am so deeply involved and to bring a very different perspective to municipal government in Boston. I am a former teacher in the Boston Public Schools, daughter of immigrants, the former president of a Dorchester civic association, small business owner, and the mom of four boys that my husband and I have chosen to raise in the city. I am running because I love this city and want to work to make sure that all kids can get a great education and play on safe streets. I am running because I want to make sure economic opportunity touches all Bostonians regardless of their zip code.**

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

**While the Boston City Council's primary role is to vote on the City budget, the responsibilities are so much more. I am proud of what I've done to hold the Administration accountable on issues ranging from the selection of the Superintendent and decisions of the School Committee, accounting for unfilled affordable ownership and rental units, and attending every budget hearing to determine where all of our tax dollars are going.**

**(B) The Budget**

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

**With one third of the City's budget allocated to Boston Public Schools, half of the hearings scheduled in City Council are dedicated to review the school's budget. In this year's schedule, BPS has included presentations on budget concerning schools with declining budgets, social and emotional learning, nurses, trauma/ crisis responses, behavioral and mental health supports, athletics and special education. These additions to their schedule demonstrate immediate progress to address the concerns from the Education hearings I sponsored this year.**

**As Chair of the Committee on Education, I look forward to continuing my advocacy for at least one full time nurse and social emotional specialist in every school, additional funding for vocational education and Madison Park Technical Vocational High School, improving resources to manage the Individualized Education Plan process, improving BPS transportation (and working to make sure they are connected to the MBTA Better Bus Routes as many of our children take public transportation to school and our school buses can utilize designated bus lanes), and making sure all of our schools have the safety protocols and resources to provide a safe learning environment. I also continue to advocate for safe routes to school considering our students safety is critical on their way to and from school. This includes an effort to increase the number of raised crosswalks near elementary schools, playgrounds and seniors centers/housing specifically.**

**The hearings to review Homeless Education Resource Network in BPS, Social and Emotional Student Supports, Veterans Services, Boston Public Health Commission, Boston Police Department, and Emergency Medical Services provide an opportunity to make sure our city agencies that support our most vulnerable residents are adequately funded.**

**As Chair on the Committee on Homelessness, Mental Health and Recovery, I continue to advocate for prioritizing affordable housing opportunities for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, expanding the Boston Emergency Services Team (BEST) program which provides mental health clinicians to partner with police officers, increasing the capacity of the mobile sharps team, expanding access to long term recovery beds, rebuilding the Long Island Recovery Campus, and increasing resources for proper needle disposal.**

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 am proud of my active engagement in this process, one of the most important as an At-Large Boston City Councilor. With a \$3.48 billion proposal before us, it is critical that we are being financially responsible, adequately investing in resources to support our residents and realizing opportunities for savings. I would support legislation that would enable line-item authority.**

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?

**It is crucial that all institutions in Boston pay their fair share, and P.I.L.O.T. payments are a step in the right direction. Some institutions pay more than their fair share, while many come up short year after year. The City must do more to hold all institutions accountable to create some level of consistency. We also must ensure that there is not undue burden placed on smaller non-profit organizations. More must be done to increase the stability and predictability of these payments so the City of Boston can budget accordingly.**

**I have called for a hearing regarding P.I.L.O.T., and at a recent working session, I advocated for and received commitment from the Administration to reconvene a P.I.L.O.T. Task Force and examine the cost of reassessing property values of non-profit institutions in the City of Boston.**

### **(C) Education**

1. What would be your top three priorities for improving the equity and quality of education in the Boston Public Schools?
  - Proper funding of the education, especially adjusting State funding and passage of the Promise Act.**
  - Providing more support and programming for students with needs often not appropriately met in many of our schools (SPED, ELL, Inclusion, students experiencing homelessness)**
  - Increasing BuildBPS funding to reach beyond the initial \$1 billion investment in our facilities to impact more children. This initial investment is important but will likely only impact approximately 10% of our school buildings (and about the same percentage of our students)**

**As a former teacher, parent of four children in the Boston Public Schools, and Chair of the Boston City Council's Committee on Education, I work every day to ensure that all children in Boston have access to a great education. Since first being elected in 2015, I have made investing in our schools and giving students, teachers, and parents the resources they need, my top priority. I have held dozens of hearings on needed improvements to how BPS operates, I have been THE leader on the Council tackling education issues, and I am consistently the only City Councilor testifying before the School Committee and the Legislature. Currently, the greatest challenge we face is closing the achievement gap and ending the opportunity divide.**

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?

**Last year, BPS rolled out Phase II of BuildBPS, a \$1 billion investment and a 10-year facilities plan for our schools. For years there has been consistent advocacy around a facilities plan that will better support our students' ability to learn and**

**BuildBPS has the potential to help improve many of our schools, but it has to be done the right way. We need to be thoughtful about how we are moving forward and how BuildBPS affects our students and families. We also need to look for ways to increase BuildBPS funding to reach beyond the initial \$1 billion investment in our facilities to impact more children. This initial investment is important but will likely only impact approximately 10% of our school buildings (and about the same percentage of our students).**

**To ensure additional accountability, I filed a hearing order for BPS to answer lingering questions and determine how community feedback will be implemented into BuildBPS. I wanted to know how they are applying what they heard from the community to the plan? Have they developed a financial plan? Is there a detailed plan for every individual school? What progress has been made to date? Do we know where these displaced students will be sent? I held Town Halls in the Fall 2018 and met with many concerned students, teachers, and families. They voiced frustration about unanswered questions about their students' future. I stand in solidarity with teachers and students that will be impacted by BuildBPS and will serve as an advocate to make sure their questions and concerns are answered. I have worked through this standing hearing order and through public testimony at the Boston School Committee regarding my BuildBPS concerns.**

**As a City Councilor it is critical we maintain our assets for the Boston Public Schools. In the case of the West Roxbury Education Complex, I have been vocal about my support to rebuild the school and maintain the asset for our students. I have also actively supported the school community of the McCormack School and other schools impacted by system changes. Additionally I have requested BPS add support services to school communities (middle schools in particular) that are being phased out in the coming years as part of BPS grade re-configurations.**

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 believe the ideal model for the Boston School Committee would be a nine-member body with five members selected by the Mayor and four members appointed by the City Council. This structure would create a more independent body that would better reflect the needs of our Boston Public Schools and give the City Council more authority over the body and help to create a better balance of power. The process to change the governance structure of the School Committee is a long one to undertake and the Council, especially those that play a more active role in education, and the State legislature process. We do have to proceed with care. In the meantime I continue to call attention to the school committee and the Mayor for the current body to be more transparent, engaged with our students, families and school communities. I also believe we should have a conversation about voting rights for the student member. That student member should receive the same stipend as the adult members of the body and I have asked for this at a recent budget hearing.**

4. What would your priorities be for youth development efforts outside of school time?  
**As a former teacher, parent of four children in the Boston Public Schools, and**

**Chair of the Boston City Council's Committee on Education, I work every day to ensure that all children in Boston have access to a great education. Since first being elected in 2015, I have made investing in our schools and giving students, teachers, and parents the resources they need, my top priority. I have held dozens of hearings on needed improvements to how BPS operates, I have been THE leader on the Council tackling education issues, and I am consistently the only City Councilor testifying before the School Committee and the Legislature. Currently, the greatest challenge we face is closing the achievement gap and ending the opportunity divide. Our City's youth need to have access to quality athletics and community programming, opportunities for employment both in the Summer and year-long. We need to make sure our City's youth programs and our non-profit community based organizations have a cooperative approach to serving our youth of different age-ranges.**

**(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. As a City Councilor our major responsibility is approving the spending decisions and our investments in resources.**
2. Do you support District Attorney Rachael Rollins's do-not-prosecute list and expanded approach to dealing with those low-level offenses? **I support an expanded approach to how we confront low level, non-violent offenses where each instance is considered and there is always consideration given to make sure we focus first on diversion and remediation, not incarceration. I appreciate that one of the most important roles of a municipal elected official is providing resources and setting policy that keeps every Bostonian safe and healthy. This includes the victim and the alleged perpetrator. As a victim of one of the listed crimes, I know how important it is to know that those who commit crimes are held accountable and that it is fair, reasonable and just. In setting public policy, we must also ensure that one minor, non-violent incident does not forever adversely impact the life of the offender and that they can remain and return to our communities and able to be productive members of our society.**
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 have supported our Trust Act as passed by the Boston City Council every year since being elected.**
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?

**NO. I believe that our public safety officers should have access to the most effective tools and training necessary to keep Bostonians safe and healthy. We do need to have measures in place to protect falsely adding any individual to this database but with gang activity largely involved in the violent crime that we do have in Boston it is critical to make every effort to keep our residents safe.**

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

**In 2016, I worked closely with the Council President to establish a new committee dedicated to working on policy issues regarding homelessness, mental health, and recovery. Since the inception of the committee, I have served as the Chair and have led the Council in establishing comprehensive recovery services, in the fight to end homelessness, and in advocating for more mental health resources.**

**Throughout my first term, I have championed an increase in services and investment for those experiencing a crisis. During the City Council's FY 2018 budget cycle, I advocated for the addition of four new Boston Emergency Services Team (BEST) mental health clinicians. The BEST clinicians ride with police officers to provide critical support and intervention for individuals in times of crisis. Through the budget process, I have also pushed to increase funding for the Boston Public Health Commission's Mobile Sharps team, which resulted in doubling the overall capacity of the program.**

**During my fight to secure more resources to combat the symptoms of the opioid epidemic, I partnered with my colleague, Councilor Ayanna Pressley, to file proactive legislation to hold pharmaceutical companies accountable. The legislation forces the pharmaceutical industry to take responsibility and contribute to legitimate solutions by providing free sharps disposal at their stores, which would increase the number of safe disposal sites in the city from nine to over 100.**

**Alongside efforts for allocating more funding, I have brought awareness and continue to lead the Council in conversations on mental health and suicide prevention. During National Suicide Prevention Month in September, I called for a hearing to examine Boston's existing mental health resources, such as treatment services, suicide prevention strategies, and de-escalation methods. I am committed to addressing the complex and often interconnectedness of mental health and addiction issues and I will continue to advocate for an increase in high-quality resources and treatment.**

**I have played an important role in the conversations and planning for the reopening of Long Island and the plans for programming on the island to support those seeking recovery. I have held hearing in collaboration with my colleagues on Long Island and have submitted testimony to the State regarding the need to reopen access to Long Island.**

## **(E) Transportation**

1. What are your top priorities for advancing efficient, equitable, and environmentally sustainable transportation in the city? **I support dedicated bus lanes (to be shared with school buses and bikes), updating the sequencing of signals especially along the green lines and reducing the number of school buses on our streets and improving the school's bus fleet.**
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 support creating more funding for safe streets, safe routes to school and increasing the miles of protected bike lanes in our City. I am also a strong advocate for raised crosswalks at elementary schools, playgrounds and senior centers/housing. I also support the reduction of speed limits and increasing enforcement.**

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

1. What are your top three priorities for making Boston a more environmentally sustainable city?  
**-Reducing emissions in Boston by first making City buildings and infrastructure more sustainable (greening roofs of municipal buildings, performing energy audits to reduce energy consumption, greening and modernizing our City vehicle fleet).**  
**-Increasing Boston's recycling rate and encouraging the expansion of composting to reduce waste and encourage sustainable behavior.**  
**-Raising the sustainability requirements for all new large buildings, to guarantee that CO2 creation and physical waste is being minimized.**
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?  
**As we plan for climate change mitigation and adaptation, it is necessary that residents from communities most adversely impacted have a seat at the table. Master planning must include representatives from the communities who will feel the impact the most. The Boston Health Commission and public health advocates need to be included in this effort as climate change not only has impacts on the physical environment but has real impacts on the health of our residents.**
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 strongly support the creation of more affordable and workforce housing for working families, seniors, and those living in poverty. Right now, Boston's housing stock is lacking, and we need to be sure that we are building housing that will enable Bostonians to live in the city they have contributed so much to. More must be done to encourage the creation of senior-specific housing, so seniors can remain in their communities. Additionally, I support efforts that require developers to build more multi-bedroom affordable units that families can actually live in.**

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

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

**Currently, developers are able to opt out of affordable housing, pay into the affordable housing fund, and then the vast majority of affordable units are developed in two or three neighborhoods. This creates tremendous disparities between our neighborhoods, which is unacceptable. By forcing developers to develop new affordable units in the neighborhood where they are building, we can begin to address this issue. I also have concerns with the process for obtaining an affordable unit. Too many units available for rental or ownership are ready to be occupied but remain vacant due to a backlog at the City and through Fair Housing. I held a hearing on this very issues in 2018 exposing this backlog and working with the Administration to improve their procedures to streamline and more quickly process applications for the lottery process.**

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, I support breaking up the BPDA to create independent public planning office.**

**As past president of my local neighborhood civic association, my approach to neighborhood decision-making is community-based. I am proud to attend and have my staff regularly attend most community meetings throughout the city. I have worked closely with community leaders, neighborhood groups, and stakeholders to ensure that residents always have a loud voice and come first.** [1] [SEP]

## **(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?

**Recent data shows that Massachusetts has some of the greatest income inequality in the country. We must work as a city to create more affordable housing opportunities so that low- and moderate-income individuals can afford to live and thrive in the City. Similarly, we must demand that more 3+ bedroom affordable units are built specifically for retaining families. I do not think that rent control is the solution to the problem, but I do believe that we should be demanding more affordable access and linkage funding out of future development projects.**

**Additionally, Boston should create affordable commercial units so that local, small businesses are able to start, grow, and thrive across all of our neighborhoods. While it is exciting to have an “Innovation District” in the Seaport, I want to make sure that access to great CAREERS (not just jobs) and the innovation economy exists throughout all of our neighborhoods.**

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, but I have some concerns regarding the current ordinance before the Council.**
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?  
**Future development and contracting in Boston must prioritize Boston residents having access to jobs with fair wages and benefits. We must do more to ensure that Boston's thriving economic engine reaches all Bostonians and reflects the diversity of our City. When I drive by construction sites, I see too many out of state license plates, while Bostonians remain unemployed. Greater enforcement**

**is necessary, and more community outreach must be done into all of our communities. Finally, I believe that BPS, especially our technical schools, should be forming lasting partnerships with construction companies and the building trades to ensure that our young people have access to good jobs and great careers.**

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

**To understand Boston's unique investments in the arts means looking beyond dollars in the budget. Music schools from Berklee to New England Conservatory that offer free concerts represent Boston's investment in the arts by virtue of the schools' tax-free status. Shows at Mass College of Art & Design, which has a free 4-year program that prepares 9th - 12th grade students, and BU School of Fine Arts are likewise part of Boston's investment in the arts. Our City is unique in its number of colleges per capita and our budget can't be compared to other cities without taking this into account.**

**Still, the challenges to support the kind of city-wide arts and culture engagement that Boston Creates envisions are real. The presence of so many large colleges, cultural institutions and hospitals limits the City's tax base and ability to fund direct dollars to the arts at high levels. As a City Councilor, I support arts dollars going to smaller, newer organizations, as well as to school-based programs. In particular, I support the significant investment we're making with the State's support for the Boston Arts Academy. As the only truly "arts" school in the district, we need to ensure it has the finest facilities and allows our children to have a full, expansive experience in an arts education. We also need to continue pushing all our schools to increase their arts programming across all schools and all grades.**

**In 2018 and 2019 I have been the lead sponsor on a hearing order to understand the impacts of an increasingly expensive and changing City on our Artist community – from a live, work and live/work perspective. I continue to work on this issue and look for opportunities to maintain and strengthen our artist community. Boston needs to make sure there is room for this community if we desire it to thrive in our City.**

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 think that we need to reexamine the linkage formula. Currently, developers are able to opt out of affordable housing, pay into the affordable housing fund, and then the vast majority of affordable units are developed in two or three neighborhoods. This creates tremendous disparities between our neighborhoods, which is unacceptable. By forcing developers to develop new affordable units in the neighborhood where they are building, we can begin to address this issue. I**

**also have concerns with the process for obtaining an affordable unit.**

**(I) Democracy**

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

**As City Councilor, I have worked to bring new voices into the political process through aggressive community outreach. I've been part of efforts to bring City Council hearings and meetings into our neighborhoods. My staff speaks 5 languages, and we have engaged diverse networks of Bostonians – especially as it relates to giving BPS parents a louder voice in government.**

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?

**As the daughter of immigrants from Tunisia and Poland, I consider voting to be among the most sacred of rights. I support efforts to engage more residents in the political process, but I don't think there should be major structural changes made to age and citizenship status in determining voting eligibility.**

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**

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?

**I support increasing terms to four years as it is one of the most immediate ways we can work to shift the balance of power between the Mayor and City Council. As someone who defeated an incumbent to get elected, I understand how important it is for new candidates to participate in our election process but also realize how expensive it is to run an election in Boston.**

**(J) Additional Comments**

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