

**Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire**

Please submit completed questionnaires by Saturday, May 4.

**Name:** Michael F. Flaherty

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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?**

- i. Make Boston more affordable.
- ii. Improve the quality and close the achievement gap in our Boston Public Schools.
- iii. Continue to address the opioid epidemic and substance abuse disorder in Boston.

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

Over the course of my professional career and personal experiences, I have gained an in-depth understanding of Boston's neighborhoods and its many diverse communities. During my time as a Boston City Councilor At-Large, my office and I always strive to address the broad and daily quality of life concerns which impact our homes, community health centers, main streets, schools, social centers, and beyond.

I have led the way in progressive politics over the course of my time in public service. This includes being the first citywide elected official to: champion the Community Preservation Act (and its implementation since then); supporting marriage equality long before the Goodridge decision; strengthening the Boston Trust Act; fighting for the expansion of legal protections for the transgender community; and advocating for better access to substance abuse treatment options. I ushered in an era of progressive leadership during my time on the Boston City Council, and I look forward to continuing that work with my colleagues and the people of Boston.

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

As the legislative branch of city government, the Boston City Council plays a crucial role in considering legislation and budgetary concerns, in addition to services and programming implemented by the City of Boston on a day-to-day basis. We allow for there to be a checks/balance system - being fully aware that we have a responsibility to the residents across Boston that we must uphold no matter their neighborhood or background.

Further, city councilors do not only engage in legislative matters. We make ourselves available outside of the hours 9am - 5pm. My approach to engaging with constituents is through a range of communication-means. My staff and I are present at hearings, various topic-based briefings, and community meetings throughout the city. Those are three key avenues that we utilize to stay informed. Our engagement efforts do not end there. My staff and I are regularly accessible via email, phone calls and walk-ins. My door is always open for you.

#### **(B) The Budget**

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

As a Boston City Councilor At-Large, I make it a point to carefully review each aspect of the budget, given that we interact with each of the departments in variety of situations when addressing quality of life concerns. That being said, I would like to make note of the following priorities:

**Education:** While investments have been made in some areas of BPS programming, I would like to see increased funding for BPS' Health and Wellness initiatives. The combined efforts allow for a student's personal and academic development. With respect to closing the achievement gap, I would like to see a school system that has smaller class sizes, an appropriate ratio of support services for students from licensed professionals, the availability of school nurses and psychologists, and even, where needed (such as in ELL and Special Ed classrooms), a better teacher to student ratio per classroom. A more focused approach will allow for a better learning environment, and ideally, a higher success rate.

**Transportation Infrastructure:** I am in full support of the budgetary proposals made by the Boston Cyclists Union and the Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition to address the need for safer, better protected bike lanes and to consider ways to eradicate traffic-related incidents. In 2014, I recommended passage of an ordinance that requires large city-owned and city-contracted motor vehicles to be equipped with side-guards to reduce the risk of fatal accidents involving cyclists and pedestrians. I also would like to see better investments made towards implementing the Slow Streets program in more neighborhoods across the city.

**Affordable Housing:** Three key tools the City of Boston has to enable better access to affordable housing are funds allocated as a result of the Community Preservation Act,

Inclusionary Development Policy, and Linkage. Given the range of legislation that the Boston City Council has voted on to address the need for dire solutions pertaining to the ongoing housing crisis during this era of growth and development, I look forward to inquiring about the data driven practices to enable for more access to affordable housing units, opportunities for home ownership, and activating vacant parcels for sustainable development and space for artists - with the end goal of stabilizing of neighborhoods.

**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. The Boston City Council annually holds over 30 Ways & Means hearings on the upcoming fiscal year's budget. Each hearing allows us to review the details of what is currently being spent and what should be spent, along with any strengths and inefficiencies. Enabling a line-item process would be helpful in providing a more transparent way to show exactly how taxpayers' dollars are being used in the City of Boston.

**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?**

As a Boston City Councilor At-Large, I have been fighting for P.I.L.O.T. reform for years. My efforts have been focused on not only increasing revenue via P.I.L.O.T. through changes to the funding formula and contribution levels, but also on broader, more sweeping systemic reforms. I have advocated for changes to how the P.I.L.O.T. system is organized in order to boost the levels of standardization, transparency and accountability in the program. During my time as Council President, I created a Special City Council Committee for P.I.L.O.T. reform. The Special Committee's work was critical to the creation of a new P.I.L.O.T. program in 2011, which sought increased payments from Boston's 48 largest tax-exempt institutions. The new program is more systematic and consistent than its predecessor, and resulted in total receipts of \$19.5 million in fiscal year 2012, which was a \$4.3 million increase over the previous fiscal year. This was a nearly 29% increase in collected revenue and represented over 90% of the program's first-year goal.

Despite the new program's early successes, I filed an order for a hearing in July 2014 to discuss the discrepancies between task force recommendations and actual P.I.L.O.T. payments to ensure institutions are being held accountable. More recently, I have spent time meeting with the P.I.L.O.T. Action Group, other advocacy groups and my colleagues to discuss how we can improve the P.I.L.O.T. program. In January 2019 I signed onto an order for a working session to discuss P.I.L.O.T. reform and offered remarks in support of reinstating the special committee on P.I.L.O.T. reform. I applaud the improvements in the city's P.I.L.O.T. program and fully appreciate the contributions that tax-exempt institutions make to our City. However, tax-exempt institutions must pay their fair share of the revenue for their use of municipal resources.

I continue to support the efforts of increased revenue via P.I.L.O.T. to benefit our City and its resources.

**(C) Education**

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

a. Closing the Achievement Gap: The Promise Act is a vital budgetary bill that will enable our the City of Boston to take steps towards reducing the achievement gap in our schools. Massachusetts touts the nation's second largest gap in 4th grade reading levels between Hispanic and white students; one-in-three English Language Learners students fail to graduate on time, and one-in-seven fail to graduate at all. Further, only 28% of low-income students performing at grade-level for math, less than half the rate of their higher-income peers; Latino and low-income families are systematically less likely to access early education preschool programs; and students who require special education programs being largely undercounted and underfunded, resulting in the cost of placing special education students at schools outside of their district being underestimated by nearly sixty percent. I fully support revisiting the outdated formula posed in Chapter 70, considering the solutions to the formula posed in the 2015 Foundation Review and phasing them into law. It's time that we follow up on the promises that we made and prove to our state's students and teachers that we will fiercely defend their right to quality education.

b. Wraparound Services: A student's well-being - both physical, mental, and social/emotional - plays a key role in their ability to attend classes, learn, and succeed. Far too often do I hear of a child being bullied, missing a meal, not sleeping well, and/or struggling with the impacts of poverty and trauma at home. There are also alarming rates of youth homelessness. These concerns and more need to be given proper attention and intervention - including investments in onsite psychologists and counselors, full-time nurses, tutoring and other student support services.

c. Year 13 Program: We are in a global economy and our students should be able to compete in it. It is not enough that a student just graduates high school - we need a school system that equitably sets up our students for success in college, trades/unions, life sciences, creative industry, etc. As the economy evolves and changes, the way we prepare our students should follow - especially when they reach the point of graduation. This is why I have proposed Year 13 which is an optional, intensive, year-long focused program that provides an additional year of college prep course work, along with SAT prep, in an effort to expose them to a post-secondary education. Year 13 would allow students to have access to academic and career-based training for an additional year after their graduation before transitioning into post-secondary education, vocational-technical school or other careers. I have heard feedback from a range of stakeholders, including ELL educators and school psychologists, who have expressed their support for this proposal.

**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 will work with my colleagues in government and the Boston Public Schools, including the newly selected Superintendent, to ensure that the community has a seat at the table during these difficult discussions and decisions. Moreover, I think using the Boston Opportunity Index - designed by the Boston Area Research Initiative (BARI) to “measure and quantify schools that serve the highest concentrations of students in need” - as a guide to ensure that all of our decisions are made with equity in mind is the best tool to utilize.

**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 continue to support an elected school committee, which is consistent with my belief in holding committee members accountable to our school system's end users: Boston's school children and their parents/guardians. I believe Boston is a dramatically different city from the one that put divisive racial politics at the heart of the elected school committee process in the 1970s and 1980s. While a hybrid committee now appeals to some as a compromise measure, I believe that Boston voters can and should be trusted to exercise good judgment in the best interests of their children and grandchildren. Core to my belief in matters of improving Boston's public schools is greater autonomy - and with it, greater accountability to parents and students.

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

I have long called for year-round student employment opportunities, along with extracurricular/summer-time programming which would connect activities as a way to provide students an opportunity to use their classroom knowledge in a practical setting. We must put access to enrichment opportunities at the forefront of their educational experience so that youth are able to gain professional skills, learn a craft, gain practical knowledge, and acquire the confidence they need to be able to compete. Alongside with expansion of youth employment opportunities, I would also like to see comprehensive financial literacy training.

**(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, the Boston Police Department and the Boston Transportation Department regularly comes before the City Council for budget and grant approval before new technology is implemented. I have long been a supporter of taking advantage of the latest technology, particularly to help our community policing and traffic reduction efforts.

While I am fully cognizant of privacy concerns, I would like to highlight that surveillance technology has allowed us to track down those who have posed a clear and immediate

danger to the public. More specifically, surveillance technology has led to the capture and arrest of those responsible for the Boston Marathon bombing, the kidnapping and murder of Amy Lord and Jassy Correia, the home invasion and murder of Dr. Richard Field and Dr. Lina Bolanos, and the kidnapping and torture of Olivia Ambrose - to name a few.

I have long called for using software and technology to formulate data-driven decisions about services and programs. Using a comprehensive technology foundation, we can better assess performance with quantitative and qualitative data. Additionally, with regards to transparency and democratic accountability: by making government data and information more accessible, we make it easier for residents to inform themselves of how we are spending their money and what decisions are being made about their neighborhoods and communities.

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

Some, but not all of them. However, I acknowledge District Attorney Rollins' approach to giving people a second chance in the case of low-level offenses. The major criminal justice reform bills S.2371 and H.4012 that passed just last year have allowed for a great expansion on the CORI reform work that the Boston City Council initiated during my time as Council President. Throughout my time in public office, both as an Assistant District Attorney and now as a Boston City Councilor At-Large, I have been a strong believer of the notion that we cannot reach many solutions to criminal justice reform by arrests and prosecutions only. Although some of the issues on the list could be discussed, many are quality of life issues that contradict the theory of community policing. I have advocated for greater dialogue and transparency between law enforcement agencies and community members to get to the root of the crime and violence facing our neighborhoods, and continue to be open to new ideas and discussions to ensure opportunities are equitable and accessible to all.

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

In 2014, as Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, I worked with a range of stakeholders - from advocacy to law enforcement - to help pass the Boston Trust Act that would be effective in strengthening our justice system and improving communication between law enforcement agencies and local immigrant communities. Due to the Boston Trust Act, the Boston Police Department cannot play the role of federal agents. Only when necessary does the Boston Police Department need to hold suspects under the request of ICE officials (if there is a court-ordered warrant, or if they've committed a serious crime that makes them an immediate danger to the public).

**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?**

I am vehemently opposed to any form of racial profiling. However, gang activities - particularly MS13, H-Block and others who have historically impacted safety concerns around the city - pose a real threat for a significant amount of the urban violence in and around city and must be addressed. I am confident that Commissioner Gross and his team will make best efforts to make sure that there are no unintended individuals on the gang database - and will remove them if they are.

**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 long advocated for more and better government-funded health services in Boston, particularly a more serious and dedicated approach to providing **treatment-on-demand** to those trapped in the cycle of substance abuse. The current opioid crisis not only impacts the affected individual, their friends, family and loved ones; but our entire community. Children in our community should not have to play in school playgrounds and public parks fearing they be pricked by a needle. We need to work collaboratively with our partners in government and in our surrounding communities to ensure that the Long Island Recovery Facility is built so that more people have an opportunity at recovery. This includes putting pressure on suburban communities and their elected officials to do their fair share when it comes to fighting addiction.

Further, ensuring that the Boston Public Health Commission and partner agencies have the appropriate resources to adequately provide clean needle pick-up, along with sufficient staff to perform emergency interventions and provide services to those most in need, should be a top priority. Moreover, I have met with constituents in some of the neighborhoods that are most affected by the opioid crisis and they express confusion about who to call in emergency situations. I would like to continue to hold in-depth dialogues and create a clear, easy-to-follow plan of action to ensure that residents know which department(s) to contact.

**(E) Transportation**

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

First and foremost, I acknowledge that our city's residents use various forms of transportation - and some are more environmentally sustainable and cost-efficient than others. But because we are a city where development is taking place on a daily basis, we need to look at necessary infrastructure investments by making sure that our local, state, and federal budgets have beyond level-funding, and that the funds are being used to reflect the needs of our communities. Commuter routes along Parkway, Blue Hill Ave, Storrow Drive, Columbus Ave between Egleston Square and Jackson Square, Morrissey Boulevard, and Summer Street are key areas where congestion needs to be alleviated.

It is also necessary that we expand the low-stress, protected bike lane network and implement more traffic calming measures, particularly on thoroughfares that would allow for an easier commute. Additionally, we need to resolve a range of disparities on the MBTA, from service and delays to fare rates. Boston pays \$85.8 million in local

assessment payments to the MBTA according to FY18 data. However, the quality of service does not correlate to this amount, and the fare classification system is unjust. I will continue to work with my local, state and federal colleagues to not only fix the T, but to expand it as well so that we get the quality and quantity of service we need and deserve.

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

Yes. It certainly does not help that the MBTA puts the financial burden as a result of the Big Dig debt on its riders through fare increases understanding that public transit is a significant means of transportation for many residents across the city - especially in a city where the cost of living continues to increase - a fare-free public transit system would alleviate the financial burden. More so, I have signed onto efforts to look at how the MBTA classifies their fare system - which, at times, is unjust and not fair based on which zone and community you are commuting from. Better access to public transit will also assist in reducing pollution and pushing back on the effects of climate change.

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

Yes. In 2001, I worked with former City Councilor Mike Ross to convince the MBTA to pilot the Night Owl program which allowed for late-night bus service until 3 a.m. However, due to budget deficits, the MBTA shut it down in 2005. There are currently individuals and families who are not served by the MBTA's hours of service that work night shifts and those who - either by choice or necessity - utilize public transportation as opposed to driving or using ride-sharing vehicles late at night. We should be working to remove barriers for our constituents as they seek to move through Boston - whether it be to go to work, visit friends and family, and enjoy the vibrant restaurant and nightlife scene our City has to offer.

**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 Boston continues to grow and develop, so does its need to have access to multi-modal transportation. Congestion on our streets and roads not only contain pollutants, but daily quality of life concerns as well. A defining feature of the Vision Zero strategy in the City of Boston is the Neighborhood Slow Streets Program. Since its launch in 2017, the Neighborhood Slow Streets program is gradually extending into high traffic areas of the city. I have supported, and will continue to support, every neighborhood's efforts to implement safety-oriented measures that enable and empower healthier communities. Further, we need to look at more long-term sustainable budget solutions so that Slow Streets programming opportunities are available on a more equal and equitable level.

**(F) Environment**

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

a. I have long called for the green sector to provide job opportunities for our citizens, especially those who have historically faced barriers to good jobs, such as underskilled workers, ESL residents, at-risk individuals, and individuals who were

formerly incarcerated. Both small and large scale developments, residential and commercial, should consider feasible incorporation of energy efficiency plans into their construction.

b. I would also like to see expansion and strengthening of the City's recycling program. I have proposed that the City requires the recycling of construction and demolition debris. Further, I have proposed that Boston require the recycling of materials from special events. With Boston the home to many special events like street fairs, sporting events, concerts and festivals, this requirement could make a significant impact on our recycling capabilities, while at the same time carving out a new opportunity for the city to reap a tangible benefit from these public events.

c. Curbside composting will also allow us to reduce groundwater pollution, and greenhouse gasses as a result of landfill. I will continue to support Councilor O'Malley's ongoing efforts to explore the adoption of curbside composting as a viable option in the City of Boston. I thought that we were ready for it last year, and I look forward to continued discussions around the adoption of a curbside composting pick up program that works for all of our neighborhoods.

**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 disproportionate impacts of climate change on communities of color, coupled with public health disparities, have already begun to take place - even if incremental occurrences. Roxbury, the geographic center of the city, faces coastal and riverine flooding, storm water flooding, and extreme heat as climate hazards according to the 2016 Climate Ready Boston report. I propose that we consider parallel tracks of both economic development - fighting climate change through installing green infrastructure, which would also allow for eco-friendly job opportunities - along with residential development - implementing energy efficiency plans into both large and small construction projects.

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

Yes. My efforts to make publicly owned or operated facilities go back to 2008 when I worked with the Boston Area Solar Energy Association to look at how we can green City Hall as a starting point. City Hall itself just turned 50 years old. I have called for the integration of plants, trees and porous surfaces to green the plaza and also effectively manage storm-water runoff around the building. While improvements have been made over the years to save taxpayers money while reducing carbon footprint, there is still more that we can do - and now is the time to act on it. At the same time, the installation and maintenance of the green upgrades would also create important green collar job opportunities for Boston residents.

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

Yes. I oppose the creation of new fossil fuel infrastructure in Boston. Further, I have stood with residents and advocacy groups in opposition to oil and gas pipelines in the city and have worked with colleagues and other stakeholders on legislation pertaining to this concern.

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

Yes. I continue to support Councilor O'Malley's ongoing efforts to explore the adoption of curbside composting as a viable option in the City of Boston. I thought that we were ready for it last year, and I look forward to continued discussions around the adoption of a curbside composting pick up program that works for all of our neighborhoods.

**(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 has been going through an era of rapid growth and development, and as a result, there are communities that are being left behind or overlooked. Construction is flourishing and it is my strong belief that residents - who are looking to make Boston their home - should benefit from this. Many residents are being priced out. Working families and individuals, retirees and low-to-moderate income people are having a difficult time finding a place to live due to the never-ending waiting lists for affordable housing units. Too many of our residents struggle to find housing and too many of our residents are consumed with the fear that they soon will be priced out of their neighborhood and lose their home.

Over the course of my time as a Boston City Councilor At-Large, I have led the call for the strengthening and expansion of access to resources for more affordable housing - including consistently leading the efforts on the Community Preservation Act, being at the forefront of inclusionary development, and championing the fact that the Linkage formula should be updated on a more periodic basis to better correlate to cost of living and income levels.

**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. I have also supported City Council efforts to implement this program in a sustainable and thorough manner - being fully aware of how funding levels have significantly been cut, but our waiting lists continue to grow for our vulnerable residents. Further, I have also sponsored a home rule petition that would allow Boston to preserve and restore at-risk affordable housing at no cost to the City. The proposal applies to current or formerly HUD subsidized housing with "expiring use" restrictions, which, according to the Mayor's Housing Report, includes about 3,000 apartments across the city. This proposal would help maintain affordable units in the city and discourage condo conversions of these homes, which often causes displacement of some of our most vulnerable populations.

**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. For majority of the development projects across the city, the affordable housing units should be on-site. However, there are certain instances where we could enable more access to affordable units by developing those off-site - this should be done on a case-by-case basis. I have been at the forefront of inclusionary development in our city when I called for the implementation of the Inclusionary Development Policy, which requires developers seeking zoning relief to set aside a certain percentage of units for affordable housing. While the current policy enables 13% of on-site units to be affordable for any developments consisting of ten or more units, I am on record of calling for an increase in percentage. I have also proposed incentives to provide on-site affordable housing development as a way to create true mixed-income developments. More recently, earlier this year, I cosponsored a hearing order to discuss the enforcement of maintaining and expanding our affordable housing stock.

**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. As we review legislation to update our approach to the Inclusionary Development Policy and Linkage, it is only logical to look at housing stock from a thorough data-driven, transparent standpoint so that the intended results are being yielded.

**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?**

I would like to acknowledge that the current leadership of the BPDA has made reforms on how they go about the development process. Historically, rather than allowing for macro-planning principles to guide the city's development process, planning was usually done on a project-specific basis, with changing and hard-to-comprehend rules. Private development goals and public planning considerations often worked at cross purposes, breeding suspicion and anxiety at the community level. That being said, there is an old saying: "Failing to plan is planning to fail." It has been my position for years that we should separate the planning and economic development functions of agency, and that we should have a standalone planning department in the City of Boston. Boston can do better in making urban planning and economic growth mutually complementary, completely transparent, and more sensitive to community concerns.

## **(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?**

Boston has become a city where high-profiled companies want to move their headquarters. As with any process that allows for approval of a company to make Boston its new home, residents and community-based groups should play an important part in assessing the impacts on their quality of life. Also, given that there is a difference in a company moving their employees from one location to another, versus a major organization hiring local residents for new jobs - access to job training and/or new jobs is a key part of the conversation.

With the cost of living in Boston rapidly increasing, we need to make sure that Boston welcomes quality and fair economic opportunities for all of our residents. We need living wages for workers in the City of Boston. During this era of growth and development, we need to be confident that Boston's residents are able to benefit from it. With significant amount of development taking place across the city, developers should comply with the strengthened Boston Residents Jobs Policy, alongside with the provision of linkage fees which requires them to assist with workforce development/job training programs, and increased opportunities for city contracting with MWBEs.

**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?**

As the Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, I have worked with Council colleagues and various stakeholders to consider legislation regarding fair work week employment standards for City contractors.

**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. Consistent with my belief that Bostonians should benefit from companies looking to - as with any industry emerging in Boston. As Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, I have held a hearing - and continuing discussions - on legislation that would allow for equitable regulations for the cannabis industry in the City of Boston. Further, given that there is data regarding the history of communities being impacted by the war on drugs - which has led to family separation, prison sentences and CORIs - it makes sense that the regulations allow for city residents and individuals from impacted communities to be given licensing preference.

**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?**

In 2017, as Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, I worked on and recommended the passage of the Promoting Equity in City of Boston Contracts Ordinance in order to address disparities in sustainable wealth building opportunities for W/MBEs. The intended long-term goals include expanding on the current efforts being made by the City of Boston. Further, I have a record of working with stakeholders to strengthen the compliance standards for the Boston Residents Jobs Policy (BRJP). With significant amount of development taking place across the city, there needs to be a more collaborative and collective approach to the City's investment in W/MBEs developers should comply with the Boston Residents Jobs Policy, alongside with the provision of linkage fees which requires them to assist with workforce development/job training programs. I will continue to work with stakeholders to make sure that developers are being held accountable on public projects, and that the Boston Employment Commission is efficiently reviewing projects monitored by the Boston Planning & Development Agency or the BRJP.

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

The creative economy has fostered innovation and has allowed artists to establish businesses, be part of our Main Streets (i.e.: Music on Main), along with activating and revitalizing open spaces and vacant parcels. While progress has been made to provide artists an incubator and a platform to share their creativity (neighborhood-based Open Studios comes to mind), the fact remains that many of our artists living in Boston cannot make a sustainable living with their art. Rather, by necessity, they have to earn wages through non arts-related jobs, which takes their time and resources away from pursuing and growing their creative skills and art forms. In addition to holding accountable the efforts of the Boston Arts Commission and the programming opportunity of 1% for public art, we must do better to in collaborating the efforts between non-profit, private and public partners to show the world Boston supports creativity. I'd also like to see better access to housing specifically for artists.

**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?**

A key criterion for these opportunity zones are "long-term private investment in low-income urban and rural communities". With the ongoing era of growth and development across Boston, it is only right that impacted Bostonian prospers from this incentive produced by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. An important piece of this policy that will benefit the 13 communities is to make sure that residents are not only part of the process, but that their concerns are part of the development plans - which would ideally deter displacement, maintain housing stability and allow for an improved quality of life in a revitalized community.

**(I) Democracy**

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

City government works best when the people who we work for are at the table and are able to contribute to the conversation. The Committee on Government Operations plays a crucial role when it comes to the point of either considering legislation for passage and implementation in the City of Boston, or reviewing government functions. I have held hearings on a multitude of topics - including housing and development, access to voting and elections, public safety, emerging industries, immigration, access to healthcare, and environmental protections - that welcomes a diverse range of voices who seek to be engaged in government, at times for the first time. Some of the results are attained through external partnerships - engaging with community-based organizations such as MassVOTE, Chinese Progressive Association, Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance and their respective networks who make grassroots efforts to reach those who may be disenfranchised and not currently engaged. Understanding that any legislation that is passed and implemented will affect the quality of life for all of our residents in this growing city, my staff and I encourage testimony - whether through attending a hearing or working session, sending an email, message through social media, or visiting our office.

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

Yes. As the Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, I have also supported and recommended passage of legislation that increases access to voter registration, including making voter registration forms available at our BPL branch libraries, providing forms in our school system for students and parents/guardians who are eligible, and for residents who are applying for or renewing a parking permit. I am in full support of the expansion of access to all forms of civic engagement opportunities, especially for residents who are looking to make Boston their home.

**3. Cities across Massachusetts and the US have taken steps to engage new constituencies in municipal elections. (a) Do you support allowing non-citizens with legal status the right to vote in municipal elections? (b) Do you support allowing 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in municipal elections?**

a. No. As Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, I held a hearing to discuss the notion of allowing immigrants with legal status to vote in municipal elections and to examine other inclusive practices conducted by the City of Boston. While the Committee heard valuable testimony from various interest groups and individuals who expressed either support or concerns on the matter, a key piece of testimony was from Veronica Serrato, Executive Director of Project Citizenship. Ms. Serrato testified that allowing immigrants to vote in municipal elections may have unintended consequences, explaining that any non-citizen who mistakenly registers to vote or votes in a federal, state or local election seriously jeopardizes their opportunity to become a legal citizen.

b. Both locally and across the nation, youth have taken on active leadership roles on a range of matters facing us - climate change, gun control and public safety, and immigration matters to name a few. Further, given that they are very much impacted on a local level on decisions being made by their government - such as through the

processes of the school system or access to youth jobs - it makes sense that they have a say. As a result, I have signed on to the City Council resolution to support Massachusetts House Bill No. 720: "An Act Ensuring Municipal Participation of the Widest Eligible Range".

**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. I would recommend a 3 term limit for the mayor's office.

**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?**

As the Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, I have recommended passage of a home rule petition to amend the current two-year terms to four-year terms. In a public hearing where we learned that there would be an estimated \$1.6 million in savings; the cost of one citywide municipal election is approximately \$800,000.00. While I acknowledge the concerns surrounding accountability and campaign finance reform, I would like to make note that a four-year term would allow a City Council to accomplish more both long and short-term, along with being more effective, substantive, and impactful - with less of an onus on campaigning.

**(J) Additional Comments**

I believe my responses to the above questions, which detail my public service record and positions on a substantial range of issues, are strong evidence of my commitment to and effectiveness in advancing an equitable and inclusive governmental agenda. My staff and I are a reflection of the levels of diversity in our city, and work efficiently to address the long and short-term concerns of residents in every neighborhood. I look forward to earning your endorsement. Thank you for your time and attention.