Tenants Political Action Committee

Questionnaire for Candidates for New York City Council

New York City Election 2017

Name of candidate:

City Council District:

Running in September 12 Democratic Primary election:

□ Yes □ No

Running in November 7 general election:

□ Yes □ No

Candidate cell phone & email address:

Campaign contact person, title & complete contact information:

Address & phone number of campaign headquarters & campaign web site:

Are you participating in the NYC Campaign Finance Board matching funds program?

□ Yes □ No

**REBNY & INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES ON ELECTIONS**

1. In 2013 the Real Estate Board of New York formed the “Jobs for New York PAC” to undertake $10 million in independent expenditures in an attempt (largely unsuccessful) to elect “business-friendly” candidates to the New York City Council. Some candidates welcomed this support, but others rejected it, issuing public statements asking Jobs for New York to stay out of their race, and generally opposing Super PAC expenditures. There is an expectation that REBNY plans to do this again in this year’s election cycle.

If REBNY targets your candidacy for support, will you issue a public statement rejecting any independent expenditure effort by the Jobs for New York PAC? Or will you accept this IE? Please explain.

**REPUBLICAN LOCK ON STATE SENATE & TURNCOAT DEMOCRATS**

2. The breakaway Democrats in the Independent Democratic Conference have entered into a power-sharing agreement with the State Senate Republicans, thereby making it impossible to pass any pro-tenant legislation. Will you promise not to endorse any State Senator for re-election in 2018 who is a member of the IDC, unless the IDC rejoins the mainline Democrats to achieve a Democratic majority?

**RENT & EVICTION PROTECTION LAWS**

3. Do you support the concept of rent and eviction regulation as a matter of policy, or do you believe that a market-based approach is preferable? Explain.

4. Do you support repeal of Vacancy Deregulation? Or do you think the threshold for Vacancy Deregulation (currently $2,700 monthly rent) should be increased?

5. Will you travel to Albany with tenants in 2018, and again in 2019 (when the state rent & coop laws expire) to lobby for repeal of Vacancy Deregulation, re-regulation of the units we have lost, and other strengthening amendments to close loopholes in our rent and eviction protection laws?

6. Will you pay for the charter of one bus to Albany in 2018 or 2019, and will you work to fill that bus with your constituents to lobby for stronger rent protections?

7. If you had the power to enact one change to our rent and eviction protection laws, what would it be?

**MITCHELL-LAMA & PROJECT-BASED SECTION 8**

8. Will you support legislation to provide rent and eviction protections to apartments in post-1973 Mitchell-Lama and project-based Section 8 buildings when landlords take them out of those programs?

**PUBLIC HOUSING**

9. The city’s public housing portfolio constitutes a crucial source of affordable housing that is troubled by under-funding and bloated, inept management. In addition, the New York City Housing Authority has adopted punitive policies directed at public housing residents.

a. How would you propose to solve the chronic under-funding of public housing? Do you believe that leasing land around NYCHA developments for part-market & part-affordable housing development is part of the solution?

b. Do you have any proposals for restructuring the New York City Housing Authority, changing how people are appointed to the board, or empowering public housing residents to give them genuine input into management decisions?

c. Do you have proposals for reforming the administrative procedures at NYCHA to provide equitable treatment of public housing residents who are subject to disciplinary or eviction proceedings, and who in the overwhelming number of cases are not represented by counsel? Explain.

**RENT GUIDELINES BOARD**

10. There are many proposals to reform and restructure the New York City Rent Guidelines Board.

a. The Rent Stabilization Law of 1969 gives sole power to the mayor to appoint the nine members of the RGB, which adopts annual rent adjustments, if any, for rent-stabilized apartments. Will you support legislation to give advice and consent power to the New York City Council?

b. Will you support legislation to change the qualifications of the five public members of the RGB (who form a majority) from “at least five years experience in either finance, economics or housing,” to “at least five years experience in either housing, public service, philanthropy, social services, urban planning, architecture, social sciences, economics, finance, or service with not-for-profit organizations?”

c. Have you testified on behalf of tenants at a public hearing of the RGB? What year(s)?

**HOMELESSNESS**

11. For three decades, the City of New York provided subsidies to help homeless families move out of shelters and into permanent housing. The Bloomberg administration reversed this policy in the belief that people were voluntarily entering the shelter system in order to get an apartment. In part because of the loss of this subsidy, the number of homeless families and individuals has grown to unprecedented numbers.

a. Do you believe that the City should increase the number of units of NYCHA public housing and Section 8 vouchers and of HPD-subsidized apartments to place homeless families in permanent housing?

b. Do you agree or disagree with the de Blasio administration’s plan to create 90 new shelters throughout the City? Explain.

**ULURP**

12. Critics complain that virtually every certified Uniform Land Use Review Procedure project gets approved, in spite of community concerns, and that the ULURP process gives inadequate consideration to environmental impacts and infrastructure burdens.

What changes, if any, would you make in the ULURP process to balance community planning efforts with centralized rezoning and achieve greater transparency in the pre-ULURP negotiations between the City and developers?

**COMMUNITY BOARDS**

13. (a) What changes, if any, would you make in the appointment of members of community boards, including but not limited to direct election of CB members, diversity requirements and homeowner/tenant balance?

(b) What changes, if any, would you make in the powers granted to community boards, especially in the ULURP arena?

(c) There have been proposals for guaranteed funding of Community Board budgets to give them greater independence, and provide funds for professional support and training. One proposal would be to mandate that the budgets for all CBs be no less than 1 percent of the annual city budget. Do you support this, or other means of enhancing resources available to CBs?

**421-a**

14. This year the state legislature and Gov. Cuomo renewed the 421-a tax subsidy program in a form that provides far more generous benefits to developers who build a mix of market-rate and affordable apartments, without an appreciable increase in the requirement for affordable units. This new law will certainly produce a significantly greater revenue loss to the City of New York. Do you support or oppose this use of our tax dollars? Do you believe that the benefits of the new 421-a program outweigh the negatives?

**DEVELOPMENT**

15. (a) INCUMBENTS ONLY: Did you vote for or against Mayor de Blasio’s Mandatory Inclusionary Housing and related zoning proposals?

(b) ALL CANDIDATES: What would you do, if anything, to change the MIH standards adopted by the City Council?

**LOFT TENANTS**

16. The Bloomberg administration pursued a tactic that pitted tenants against the perceived need for manufacturing space to the benefit of neither party, but giving a considerable boost to the city's tax base and the pace of gentrification of the outer boroughs. For thirty years the City ignored the fact that landlords of commercial buildings were illegally renting spaces to creative folks who both lived and worked in their lofts, without a Certificate of Occupancy. Having done nothing to discourage conversions, Bloomberg strenuously objected to the 2010 loft law expansion by the state legislature, which gave rent and eviction protections to the tenants and required that the landlords perform work to provide fire and health safety. The mayor successfully insisted that several anti-tenant provisions be added that will result in the eviction of many of the pioneering tenants while leaving those vacant spaces ripe for luxury development.

(a) Do you see a way to modify the rules the Loft Board adopted regarding “incompatible use” to protect the people who helped revive these neighborhoods and slow gentrification?

(b) How would you propose to establish a process that would make sure the interests of tenants and manufacturers are served fairly, and to avoid a repeat of this cycle in future years?

**PREDATORY EQUITY & TENANT HARASSMENT**

17. A direct effect of the weakening of the rent and eviction protection laws by the New York City Council and the New York State Legislature has been the rise of predatory equity, whereby unethical investors buy up rent-regulated apartment buildings, often paying commercially unrealistic prices, with the goal of forcing tenants out so they can charge market rents. Tactics such as bogus eviction cases, patchwork repairs, threats, repeated disruptions of essential services, construction as harassment, and even violence are part of the tool kit. This practice is enabled by irresponsible lenders who provide financing to these sharks.

Three City Council bills have been introduced to curb predatory landlords: Intro 1210, which requires the City to create a Watch List of predatory landlords; Intro 1211, which creates a rebuttable presumption that a landlord is engaged in tenant harassment when they engage in certain activities; and Intro 1212, which requires the City to create a Lender Watch List, of lenders who provide financing to predatory landlords.

Do you support these bills?

**COMMERCIAL RENT PROTECTIONS & LEASE RENEWALS**

18. Do you support commercial rent stabilization? Or do you support a system of mandatory mediation between owners of commercial properties and owners of businesses? Explain.

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19. Describe any actions you have personally undertaken in your career to protect tenants’ rights, rent regulation, or the preservation of affordable housing.

20. Please list all organizations & elected officials who have endorsed your campaign.

**Please return this questionnaire to** [mmckee@tenantspac.org](mailto:mmckee@tenantspac.org).

Tenants Political Action Committee

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**DEADLINE FOR RETURNING QUESTIONNAIRE: Friday, July 21, 2017**

(The sooner you return it, the sooner we can schedule an interview.)

Email your completed questionnaire to [mmckee@tenantspac.org](mailto:mmckee@tenantspac.org). Please use the following format to name your file:

Jones CCD 52 6-2017

(Candidate last name, City Council District, Month-Year)

(See next page for optional questions.)

**OPTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

*Candidates can score “extra points” with answers to these questions, but it is not necessary to answer them in order to be considered for an endorsement.*

**REPLACEMENT FOR 421-a**

21. If you had the power to design a program to stimulate the production of housing using subsidies in the form of forgiving collection of real property taxes, similar to the current 421-a program, what would that look like?

**COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS**

22. Community land trusts are nonprofit, community-based organizations designed to ensure community stewardship of land. Community land trusts can be used for many types of development (including commercial and retail), but are primarily used to ensure long-term housing affordability. To do so, the trust acquires the land and maintains ownership of it permanently. Are there parcels of land in your district that could be used for a CLT? Are there community development organizations and/or non-profit developers that could steward this process?

**MOLD**

23. What do you think should be done to address the problem of mold in residential housing? Does New York City need a local law to address this issue, and, if so, what should such a law provide?

**Thanks for completing our questionnaire. Good luck to all candidates.**