

2021 Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Said Abdikarim

Office Sought: Boston City Council At-large

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(A) Your Candidacy

1. What would be your top three priorities if elected to serve?

Affordable Housing, STEM/Vocational Education and Environment

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I am a community organization board member and an advocate for STEM and vocational skills. I have volunteered and worked on the campaigns of city and state politicians in Boston and Massachusetts. This exposure allowed me to hear and see firsthand the needs of Bostonians and the issues they faced. Living in Boston public housing, attending BPS, and coming from low-income communities, I lived the issues I am fighting for. Working as an engineer, technologist, instructor, and analyst at Apple, Harvard University, and Fidelity Investments, I bring a much-needed skillset to city hall. With a strong numbers background, I can analyze our city budget, educational and economic disparities, to fight for resources in much-needed areas. If given the honor and privilege to serve as city councilor at large, I will use my career in technology to fund STEM and vocational programs; which I believe is a viable solution to bridging the wealth gap.

3. What is the one policy you've seen pioneered in another city that you'd most like to see Boston adopt?

EUGENE, OR : 10 BUILDING BLOCKS OF

A BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY. Bicycle-Friendly Laws & Ordinances for EUGENE is excellent compared to Boston which is average. In order to reduce pollution,

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and adopt a healthier Boston, how laws and ordinances need to support Boston being a bicycle friendly city.

- 4. Which of the following groups have you chosen to reject / would reject campaign contributions from? (For-profit developers, Fossil fuel executives or lobbyists, Charter school advocates and lobbyists, Police officers)**

For-profit developers, Fossil fuel executives or lobbyists, Charter school advocates and lobbyists, Police officers.

(B) Racial Equity & Community Engagement

- 1. Name three accomplishments you've been able to achieve to advance racial justice or equity.**

- 1.Volunteer teaching technology and financial literacy to kids from low-income communities
- 2.Invest in minority women entrepreneurs
- 3.Reach out to politicians, educate them and try to hold them accountable

- 2. What steps would you take, if elected, to engage all the diverse communities of Boston in policymaking, and what past actions of yours should give voters confidence that you will follow through?**

1. Being fluent in 3 languages I would use my language skills to reach out to different communities in Boston
2. Growing up in public housing and attending BPS allows me that personal connection with the same communities I grew up in or went to school
- 3.My volunteer, activism and advocacy track record has build credibility and strong support within different communities in Boston

(C) Charter Reform & Balance of Power

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

Acts as checks and balance against the powers of the mayor. But I still think the City Council role is limited in our strong-mayor system.

- 2. The City Council currently has very little ability to influence the budgeting process. Would you support legislation to enable line-item budgetary changes? YES/ NO**

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Yes.

- 3. Would you support Charter Change to allow for Ranked Choice Voting in Boston?
YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 4. Would you support changing the city charter to impose term limits for the office of Mayor in Boston? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 5. What, if any, other changes to the City Charter would you like to see?**

Councilors' ability to influence the budgeting process.

(D) Revenue

- 1. Do you support the PILOT Action Group's recommendations for a standing PILOT commission with community representation? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 2. Given state law, Boston is limited in its taxing power. What opportunities do you see for the city to raise revenue?**

1.Convert city services into utilities, charging higher rates for bulk users of utilities (ex; corporations)

2.Reform corporate tax breaks at the city level

- Charge corporations a tax percentage that would want them to do business in Boston, while on the other hand would generate optimal revenue for the city.

3.Commuter Tax

-The city can charge a fee to those who commute to Boston from wealthy suburbs or areas with low property taxes.

(E) Education

- 1. What are your top priorities for reducing persistent racial and economic achievement gaps in the Boston Public Schools?**

1.Find Funding for STEM and vocational programs

2. Reform exam school entrance requirements ; weight more teacher recommendations, and student GPA

-Eliminate zip code selection

3. Push for a selected school committee

4. Push for a BPS liaison from each school that directly works with the mayors office.

2. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools in Boston? YES/ NO

Yes.

3. Do you support a change in BPS governance to allow Boston voters the right to elect school committee members, like every other city in Massachusetts? YES/ NO If so, what would your ideal structure be? If not, why not?

Yes. Some elected school board members and some appointed. This creates accountability and transparency between BPS and the mayors office.

4. Do you support removing police from Boston public schools? YES/ NO

Yes.

5. Do you support making a permanent change to the admissions process for Boston's exam schools? YES/ NO And if so, what would your proposed alternative system be?

Yes. Weight more GPA and teacher recommendations instead of the exam itself. Some students are not good test takers when they know the test is weighted heavily on the outcome.

6. What steps would you take to make universal pre-K a reality in Boston?

There needs to be a big investment to make universal pre-K a reality in Boston. The first thing that needs to be figured is out how to allocate enough money to support this initiative. At the state level, the budgeting for education needs to involve universal pre-K. If the money problem can be solved, then the question of what constitutes a quality pre-K needs to be answered. I think university students who are studying education, sociology, psychology, early childhood, can use their work-study funds to work with children in their homes. Another option would be to build pre-K centers inside universities, where parents can drop off their children where students are employed. I believe this would solve some of the financial issues because students are using work-study funds.

(F) Public Safety

- 1. Do you support requiring the police department and other city agencies to get City Council approval before acquiring new surveillance technologies or military equipment? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 2. Do you support the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office's do-not-prosecute list and expanded approach to dealing with such low-level offenses? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 3. Do you support ending information sharing between the Boston Police Department and ICE? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 4. Do you support closing the loopholes in Boston's Trust Act which allow BPD to inquire about immigration status or pass information along to ICE? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 5. Do you support shuttering the Boston Police gang database? YES/ NO**

No.

- 6. Would you support a hard cap on overtime for individual officers? If so, what percentage of an officer's salary? YES/ NO**

Yes. 70K

- 7. What changes to the 2017 Boston Police Patrolman's Association (BPPA) contract would you advocate for in the latest round of contract negotiations?**

more regulatory on overtime pay and dash/body camera usage.

- 8. What current functions of the Boston Police Department should be transferred to agencies under civilian control, and what governance would you propose for them?**

Non violent calls

Mental Distress

Under 18 child/teen involved calls

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Public School incidents

- 9. Would you advocate for the reallocation of money from the Boston Police Department budget to reinvestment in communities? YES/ NO If so, how much?**

Yes. 20-25%

- 10. Which of the following would you support banning the use of by the Boston Police Department? (Tear gas and other chemical weapons, Rubber bullets, Attack dogs)**

Tear gas and other chemical weapons, Rubber bullets, Attack dogs.

- 11. Do you believe that affiliation or sympathies with white supremacist organizations among officers is a problem with BPD? YES/ NO If so, what measures would you take as mayor to combat that issue?**

No.

- 12. Do you support safe consumption sites? YES/ NO**

Yes.

(G) Environment & Transportation

- 1. Do you believe Boston needs to reduce its dependence on cars, and if so, how would you propose to do so?**

Yes. Offer incentives for alternative transportation such as bicycles or public transit. Discounted transit passes or access to discounted bicycles.

- 2. What are your top three policy priorities for making Boston a climate-resilient city, and how would you ensure that equity is at the center of any such efforts?**

1. Energy Efficient Buildings
2. Energy Efficient Transportation
3. Healthy food access and urban farming

- 3. Do you oppose the creation of new fossil fuel infrastructure in Boston? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 4. Do you support fare-free public transit? What steps would you take to achieve this goal? YES/ NO**

Yes. I support it for residences that are having financial hardship, students, and those ditching their cars for public transit.

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5. Do you support the adoption of a curbside composting pickup program? YES/ NO

Yes.

(H) Housing

1. How would you expand affordable housing in Boston and ensure development without displacement?

1. Add more affordable units

2. Vacant Tax for unoccupied property

3. Rent control

4. Lower income requirement in affluent neighborhoods throughout Boston

2. What opportunities do you see for leveraging city-owned land for expanding affordable housing?

The city needs to build affordable housing in city-owned lands. This is a good opportunity.

3. Do you support a real estate transfer tax for commercial and residential sales, with the revenue going to an affordable housing trust? YES/ NO What exemption threshold, if any, would you advocate for?

Yes.

4. Do you support rent control? YES/ NO If so, how would you structure such a policy? If not, why not?

Yes. Using

1. Income level

2. Family size

3. Available Affordable units

5. Do you support the renewal of Boston's condo conversion law, which affords residents of covered properties a notice period, right of first refusal to purchase their unit, relocation assistance, just cause eviction, and relocation benefits if their unit is converted to a condominium? YES/ NO

Yes.

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- 6. Would you support a Tenant Opportunity to Purchase ordinance, enabling tenants to purchase a building if the owner seeks to put it on the market? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 7. Boston's inclusionary development policy (IDP) requires that 13 percent of the units in a building need to be affordable. Do you support increasing this number? YES/ NO If so, to what? Please List %**

Yes. 26%.

- 8. 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/ NO**

Yes.

- 9. Do you support breaking up the BPDA and creating an independent public office of planning? YES/ NO If so, how will you make it happen?**

Yes.

- 10. Do you support increasing the number of units that are ADA compliant in projects that receive City funds? YES/ NO**

Yes.

(I) Economic Opportunity

- 1. What steps would you propose to reduce Boston's income and wealth inequality, especially the racial wealth gap?**

1.Fund STEM/Vocational education

2.Fund financial literacy programs

3.Create pilot program to earn income from first time buyers program

- 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/ NO**

Yes.

- 3. Do you support ending subminimum wages for tipped workers in Boston? YES/ NO**

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Yes.

4. How would you **enforce** the hiring goals set forth in the Boston Jobs Residency Policy (which requires that least 50 percent of the total work hours in each trade must go to **Boston** residents, at least 25 percent of the total employee work hours in each trade must go to people of color, and at least 10 percent of the total employee work hours in each trade must go to women)?

1.Through contract regulation

2.Department regulators

5. What targets in city contracting would you commit to for minority-owned businesses as well as Black-owned businesses in particular, and what steps would you take to realize such targets?

1. Construction

2.Small Business

3.15-20% contracts towards minority/black business

4. Through department and contract regulations

- a. Will you commit to immediately directing all City departments and quasi-city agencies to unbundle large contracts that are set to become available in 2021 and beyond in order to facilitate this? YES/ NO

Yes.

- b. Will you commit to regular reporting to track progress toward and beyond this goal? YES/ NO

Yes.

6. The cannabis industry is expected to be a major source of growth in Boston in the coming years. What steps should the City take to make sure that it grows in an equitable way, in which the communities most impacted by the drug war are able to benefit?

Through licensing regulations and research. Making sure that minorities get their fair share of licensing.

7. Would you support the creation of a municipal broadband network? YES/ NO

Yes.

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(J) Democracy

- 1. Do you support allowing non-citizens with legal status the right to vote in municipal elections? YES/ NO**

No.

- 2. Do you support allowing 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in municipal elections? YES/ NO**

Yes.

- 3. In 2022, Boston will engage in redistricting on the municipal level. What would an equitable redistricting process look like to you?**

One with

1. Community/Resident participation

2.No legislative pressure

3. nonpartisan

- 4. Would you support the redrawing of Boston's wards and precincts ("reprecincting"), which has not happened in more than 100 years -- and which happens decennially in other MA cities and towns? YES/ NO**

Yes.

(K) Additional Comments

It would be an honor to serve the people of Boston and fight the special interest groups that are reshaping our beloved city.