

2021 Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Kelly Bates

Office Sought: City Council At-Large

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

- Public health, including COVID-19, mental health, and addiction
- Housing affordability and homelessness
- Equitable economic recovery, including support for local businesses, the arts and nonprofits, a fare-free T, and closing the racial and gender wealth and contracting gaps in the city

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I am a coalition-builder, problem-solver, mom, crisis management leader, lawyer and social change advocate who for more than 25 years has led organizations locally and nationally. I have worked with cities, nonprofits, community leaders, and philanthropic organizations to support racial equity and social change through the power of collaboration.

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

Instead of looking to another city, I have an example of when Boston pioneered a successful policy that we must re-adopt. In the 1990s, for several years, through what was called "The Boston Miracle" we invested in our youth with summer jobs, community-based programming, deep relationships with local leaders, and took the time to listen to them. We were successful in reducing the youth homicide rate to nearly zero for multiple

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years. However, when funding for youth jobs dried up, the violence resumed. We have pioneered this policy before, which is a model in many other cities, and we can do it again.

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)

. We will not hold fundraisers with or solicit donations from any of the groups above. As a woman of color, I face systemic challenges and disparities when it comes to fundraising. This is one reason why I have long advocated for the public funding of elections and was the lead plaintiff for clean elections in Massachusetts.

(B) Racial Equity & Community Engagement

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

- I worked with electoral justice organizations to expand voting rights in Massachusetts and increase turnout among Black and Brown voters in Boston. I led the campaign for people of color communities to re-draw the congressional district that Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley ran from, and sued the state as lead plaintiff for publicly funded elections.

- I led a coalition of over 50 women's groups that successfully advocated for policies that benefited women and girls. Working together, we passed legislation that ensured new mothers could stay in the hospital longer after childbirth and the first law prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace. This had led to protections for women particularly women of color.

- I organized across the city to prevent devastating cuts and closures to neighborhood Boston Public Library branches in 2010. Libraries have been a critical place of community learning and education for so many low-income and Black and Brown children in Boston.

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?

For over twenty-five years I've helped support, organize, and garner resources for organizations and leaders to push for progressive urban policies and open up our government by advocating for participatory budgeting and electoral justice to engage more residents, particularly those historically excluded, in our civic processes. My career

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has been committed to serving Boston's communities of color, women, low-income and working families, young people, and people with disabilities. I will continue to engage them at every opportunity by ensuring that they are hired on our staff, advise me through a regular and ongoing advisory structure, are invited to give testimony, are heard in every boston agency corridor, and bring their ideas for policy to the Council so that we can take action.

(C) Charter Reform & Balance of Power

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

The Council's role should be to hold the Mayor and city departments accountable through the budget process and hearings, advocate on behalf of residents and provide constituent services, and use the "bully pulpit" to advocate at the local and state level. I believe they should share power with the Mayor as the legislative body of the city.

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

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?

The Boston City Council should be empowered with the authority of creating a budget, not just making line-item changes as proposed above. I also believe in a fully-elected school committee with a voting, paid youth representative.

(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?**

First, we must advocate for the passage of the Fair Share Amendment, which would raise taxes in incomes over \$1 million to invest in our schools and infrastructure. I would work to end tax giveaways for millionaire developers. I would divert funds from the police budget to social programs and services and diminish police overtime. I also support taxes on luxury real estate sales and unoccupied housing units.

(E) Education

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

We need to ensure that every neighborhood has state-of-the-art schools in Boston with strong academic programs, technology, and arts education. We need to Invest in the mental health, social-emotional learning, and wellness of our students and their parents, especially given the realities of the pandemic. We need to make our exam schools more diverse through equitable and holistic admissions practices that do not rely on testing as the primary means for recruiting young people into school. We need to hire a diverse workforce of educators, particularly teachers of color and build a pipeline for Boston students who want to become teachers.

- 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. Yes, I would advocate for a fully-elected school committee, including an election of a paid student representative with full voting power on the committee.

- 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. I would work with advocates like Lawyers for Civil Rights and the NAACP Boston Branch, that have recommended several possible reforms, including: reserving seats for the highest ranked students in each public middle school or zip code, employing a

holistic admission model that looks beyond GPA and test scores, and developing a test based on the BPS curriculum. I fully support the recent legal decision to consider the zip codes of students in admissions policy of exam schools.

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

I would dramatically expand the number of seats available for K0 and K1 (three and four-year old) students in BPS and support home-based providers to educate our young children. I would also advocate to help eligible families access state and federal subsidies, and state funding for universal pre-K.

(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

Yes.

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

Yes. I would want to consult with activists working on this issue. I would support eliminating minimum overtime for court appearances.

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

I would incorporate the role of the civilian review board in discipline and would work with advocates to include other suggestions and policies to the latest round of contracts.

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?

All substance abuse, mental health, and people struggling with homelessness should be shifted to civilian controlled agencies

Traffic and parking enforcement

Removing all BPD officers from BPS

We should train up social workers and community leaders to handle many of these issues which could open up jobs and opportunities for Boston residents.

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. I would advocate for 10% to 12% of the BPD budget to be reallocated to investment in communities.

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?

Yes. I believe we should investigate whether current or prospective police officers have affiliations or documented beliefs or links to white supremacy. They should not be allowed to serve on our police force. We need to engage in massive police-wide training every three years on anti-racism in policing.

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?**

Fare free MBTA

Improve walking, biking and alternative transit options.

More transit-friendly and oriented housing

- 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?**

Supporting a city-level Green New Deal for Boston that creates green jobs by investing in renewable energy infrastructure, promotes environmental justice, and fights rising sea levels and climate change.

Making new city-owned construction net-zero carbon emissions and opposing all fossil fuel infrastructure projects.

Protect coastal neighborhoods by investing in anti-flooding infrastructure.

We should analyze all Boston policies and practices through the lens of its impact on our city climate and resilience.

- 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.

- 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?**

We must use all tools available in our city, including zoning reform, housing production, and rent control to bring down housing costs.

I would work to support affordable homeownership opportunities through downpayment assistance, first-time homebuyer programs, and supporting the construction of more affordable homes.

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I would work to support staffed supportive housing to help people experiencing homelessness become housed.

We must also reform the Zoning Board of Appeals and the BPDA to be more community-representative, with dedicated seats for climate resilience and affordable housing filled. Developers should not be regulating themselves.

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

City-owned land represents a huge opportunity to expand both affordable homeownership and deep affordable housing. Because land acquisition costs are not a factor, we should require developers to meet stricter affordability requirements.

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. Luxury real estate sales of over \$1 million should have to pay a transfer fee.

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

Yes. I would support a range of options for rent control, and would work with advocates to determine the most effective and politically feasible strategy for passing and implementing it as soon as possible.

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.

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. I support increasing the percentage to 25% of units and lowering the size of projects that are subject to the policy.

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- 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. I would support such a home-rule petition and use my efforts to advocate to the Mayor and state legislature to make this happen.

- 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?**

I would advocate for reforming city contracting, strengthening equal pay legislation, providing pathways for Black, Brown, and other people of color to access well-paying and sustainable jobs, and ensuring that we enforce the policy to hire Boston residents for government jobs.

- 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**

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)?**

I would hold accountable city departments for enforcing the policy for their projects via the budget process, and would work with district councilors to pressure subcontractors

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that are not compliant. I would also work to promote career-readiness and pathways trade jobs through Madison Park TVHS, to ensure that inability to find qualified workers is never an excuse.

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?

There is no reason that we can't double or triple the current number in the long term. In order to do so we must streamline the application process, build the infrastructure by splitting up contracts and encouraging subcontracting to enable more local MBEs to be able to take them on.

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?

Ensure the implementation of the city's cannabis equity ordinance, which created a city-level licensing system is predicated on equity. I would seek to ensure that it is being followed so that the number of non-equity licenses never exceeds the number of equity licenses. We need to make sure that the appointments to the Boston Cannabis Board are diverse, and that funds generated are used for real economic empowerment.

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

Yes.

(J) Democracy

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

Yes.

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?

I previously organized and supported a coalition that sought to redistrict Massachusetts lines which led to a majority people of color district in Congress. The process must include data driven analysis, understanding of the diversity in the differing neighborhoods of Boston, and a deep commitment to representational leadership for Boston.

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

In addition to the policies I support above, I also am passionate about creating policies that address the wealth gap and violence towards women and girls such as:

Expanding programs to prevent violence against women and girls in their homes, schools, workplaces, and communities

Working to end sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls by expanding programs run by the Office of Women's Advancement

Closing the racial and gender pay and wealth gaps by ensuring pay equity in city jobs, investing in women and minority-owned businesses, and strengthening pay-equity legislation

Providing expanded support for housing-insecure single women and women fleeing abuse by ensuring that they are prioritized for public housing units

Advocating for a law that requires insurance companies be accountable for covering all pregnancy-related medical care at no cost, and expand MassHealth to cover doula care

Providing free menstrual products in BPS schools and city buildings

Fighting to end the disparity in maternal mortality rates of women of color and immigrant women by bringing together advocacy groups, healthcare providers, and public health officials

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Additionally, mental health is a priority for me. I have family members who have struggled with addiction and access to mental health resources. This has shaped who I am and what I will fight for if elected. I commit to:

Investing in long-term, supportive addiction treatment and recovery, not jails or imprisonment

Holding health insurance companies responsible for providing addiction recovery services

Funding expanded mental health services to heal the wounds of isolation due to COVID-19, and to address the long-existing lack of mental health services

Creating a cabinet-level position whose sole job is to address the homelessness and addiction crisis throughout the city and especially at Mass Ave. and Melnea Cass.

Rebuilding the Long Island Bridge and establishing a long-term addiction recovery campus

Ensuring that surrounding communities and the state do their part to address the opioid crisis and alcohol addiction

I appreciate your consideration for this endorsement. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best,

Kelly

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