

## **2021 Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire**

# **James "Reggie" Colimon**

**Office Sought:** Boston City Councilor At-Large

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### **(A) Your Candidacy**

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

Vocational jobs training - 0 of the top vocational jobs programs are in MA, let alone Boston. I seek to bring a quality public vocational training program which will help in sustainable job creation.

Pipeline program for minorities in law and law enforcement - Change cannot happen when over 75% of lawyers and 65% of police officers are white, despite white people making up 45% of our city. This change happens by changing the pipeline and connections for minorities to help them enter these fields and be supported by local government.

Bridge the digital divide - 15% of people in Boston still don't have access to the internet, and even more don't have access to reliable internet. I plan to change this by ensuring equitable opportunity to access for low-income people and expanding our ability to provide 5G to everyone.

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

I have worked under 3 Boston Mayors (the late Mayor Menino, former Mayor Walsh, and Mayor Janey). Under Mayor Menino, I pioneered the City of Boston's first Free Immigration Clinic (in 2004). Attorney experts in all facets of immigration volunteered and offered free immigration advice to people who could not afford a lawyer. More recently, I helped build a Global Affairs team within Mayor Walsh's Office of Economic

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Development, hosting international dignitaries, officials, and delegations from the four corners of the globe, and bringing new economic and partnership opportunities

to Boston.

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

In New York City, an internet master plan was devised to begin to solve the digital divide. The plan creates a universal broadband provider with multiple operators, rather than being with 1 company. It would lower the cost and increase competition throughout the city. With this also comes the ability to begin building out 5G throughout the city. Not only will they bring broadband access to people hit hardest by the digital divide, but bring them up-to-speed with the most recent internet changes. Additionally, NYC has released an affordable internet package plan so low-income individuals and families can purchase internet at an affordable rate. This is a crucial step in recognizing the internet is crucial to the way our society operates.

**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. I would reject money from police unions but might accept from individuals.

**(B) Racial Equity & Community Engagement**

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

- a. Interpreted for LatinX constituents on court proceedings with abusive landlords
- b. Learned Spanish to help the LatinX population to have a seat at the table.
- c. Pioneered a free immigration clinic in 2004 that is still in existence.

**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?**

The City of Boston is a majority minority City, If elected, I will host frank and open community dialogues across the city about race and inequality, so that everyone's voices can be heard.

**(C) Charter Reform & Balance of Power**

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

Getting more involved in the City's budget.

**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. Ranked choice is crucial to accurately picking the will of the voter.

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

Yes. I would support a two 6 year term for Mayor, and a two 4 year term for City Councilors.

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

Not allowing a candidate to run for two offices simultaneously.

**(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?**

We need to find other alternatives when it comes to revenue for the City in lieu of always increasing property taxes.

**(E) Education**

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

a. Universal Pre-k

b. Culturally unbiased curriculum in STEAM.

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**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.

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

Yes. School resource officers, especially in the city, do little to protect students and have the ability to do more harm than good. I would support removing officers from the school and replacing them with better access to counseling.

**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?**

No.

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

We have to recognize the importance of universal pre-K. Educators and experts alike agree children are much better off when they attend pre-K. Education is a right, not a privilege. Extending this through reducing the budget in areas, such as policing, is a must for our city. Moreover, I would work with my Boston City Hall Council colleagues to redefine the important issues of Boston. We know education is a right, so we must redefine our budget to reflect this reality.

**(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. We must limit the militarization of government/government offices

**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**

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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 am still working to develop a specific hard-cap percentage. I would like to see it capped around 15% of an officer's salary, but this percentage is likely to fluctuate.

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

Less overtime, while hiring more social workers and 911 dispatchers.

- 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?**

a. Answering mental health crises

b. Calls to help with homeless people

c. Certain security details by private citizens

d. The governance should be under the Office of Police Accountability and Transparency (OPAT).

- 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. While I am working to develop an exact figure, I estimate between \$75 - \$100 million budget cut is both feasible and can do a lot of good for our 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.

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**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. As I stated, one of my top priorities is to create a pipeline for BIPOC individuals to enter law enforcement. With this also comes the diversification of top BPD officials and those that hire new officials to ensure we are not hiring people incapable of serving our majority minority city.

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

Yes. This is another policy piloted in other cities/countries that have proven to be incredibly effective in harm reduction.

**(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. I am in favor of providing free city bikes to anyone that lives in the city. Biking not only creates 0 emissions, but also helps create healthier lifestyles in adults and children alike. In order to help motivate people and increase comfortability biking in the city, I propose we ensure we have safe bike lanes throughout the city and close of the streets.

**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?**

a. Strong outreach to make everyone understand and implement the UN's 17 sustainable development goals under their own volition.

b. Work with the communities to create climate resilient programs such as composting.

c. Implement and exceed President Biden's pledge to reduce the US carbon emission to 50% by 2030.

**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**

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

Ensuring that affordable housing is incorporated in higher income neighborhoods; otherwise, it furthers segregation when affordable homes are only in low income communities.

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

In a city as expensive as Boston, affordable housing should include housing for young professionals by city-owned land.

**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?**

No. I strongly support creating better protections for renters in the city, especially against evictions. While these have been strengthened during COVID, we have to permanently enact the changes.

**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. 15%.

**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**

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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. By holding public hearings and directly capturing the public sentiment of BPDA.

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

Yes. Boston, being one of the oldest cities in the US, was not originally built with differently-abled people in mind. The time is now to make that change and ensure all people are able to safely enjoy our beautiful city.

### **(I) Economic Opportunity**

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

I believe a large part of Boston's economic future is in vocational jobs. I would emphasize vocational training in most of the high schools in Boston. And perhaps, include vocational training programs in our community colleges.

- 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)?**

Imposing fines on companies that violate the Policy

- 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?**

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- 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?**

Since our country was founded, Blacks and other minorities have been shut out of the economy in grave ways. Today, non-whites have the opportunity to enter an industry in its early beginnings. The cannabis industry must be taken advantage of by BIPOC individuals. The City can do this by providing seed capital solely to minorities to begin their journey into the business world, as they do not have the funds to start typically. Additionally, partnering with the nonprofit (like E for All) and for profit sectors to provide entrepreneurship lessons is a must for ensuring the long-term success of our minority businesses. Moreover, the city must make it easier to get permits for these businesses.

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. Studies show 16 and 17 year olds are more than capable of making voting decisions at their age. Lowering the voter age will increase youth turnout, give a much-needed voice to young people, and make our city a better place.

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

An equitable process would include community input and evaluations from independent experts. It absolutely cannot shut out our most vulnerable populations.

**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. Yes, so that wards and precincts reflect the demographics of our communities.

**(K) Additional Comments**

My platform is about bringing equitable and sustainable policies to Boston. Our City is growing rapidly more diverse and with it must come more diverse and progressive policies. There is no reason Boston should still be facing many of the inequalities we do today - our police not representing our City's makeup, internet access being inaccessible to 15% of the population, and 0 of the top vocational jobs training programs in the country. I believe if I am elected, I can help to end these inequalities by shedding light on the solutions of our City's future.