

# 2021 Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire

## Deeqo Jibril

**Office Sought:** Boston City Council - District 4

**Website:** deeqo.org

**Facebook:** Deeqo Jibril for District 4

**Twitter:** @DeeqoJibril

**Instagram:** @deeqojibril

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

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

##### 1. Affordable housing

Boston is in urgent need of a clear and accessible path to affordable home ownership, and our city government needs to make the mission of eradicating homelessness a top priority. An emphasis of my campaign is increasing home ownership with home buyer programs, community aid, and educational resources.

##### 2. Education

I would advocate for predictable and sustained investment in our students. That includes fully funding our classrooms, and I would advocate for investment and support to ensure that children in every neighborhood have access to high-quality, local public education in their neighborhoods, regardless of income.

##### 3. Job and youth opportunities

It is so important that we create opportunities and pathways for our youth to succeed. This includes investing resources in job development, after school programs, and school counselors, but it also includes limiting, to the greatest extent possible, the amount of interactions our youth has with law enforcement.

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

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At a time when we are reckoning with economic, public health, and racial injustice, and while our changing city is tasked with rebuilding our economy in a way that centers equity, I believe I am singularly poised to serve. I have worked with the ABCD Housing department as a case coordinator, helping countless Bostonians to understand and obtain affordable housing. As the founder of the Somali Community and Cultural Association, I have provided support for Somali youth and families struggling with loss, trauma, and resettlement challenges. I have supported and elevated the role of my community in the political, social, and economic life of the city, helping engage those who would not typically be civically engaged. Currently, I work at the Mayor's Office of Economic Development as a Neighborhood Business Manager, where I support and provide resources to small businesses in the district I am running to represent.

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

At the beginning of COVID, Minnesota implemented a program which provided emergency loans to small businesses with less than 25 employees. The loans were interest free, to be paid back over five years and the first payment deferred six months. The program stipulated an hourly and annual livable wage for employees and interns, helping ensure oversight and fair treatment of staff.

I believe this program can be brought to the City of Boston for all small businesses. Interest free loans of up to \$50,000 for small businesses would empower our communities and create economic opportunity.

**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 )**

. As a single mother of four children who works full-time, without name recognition or generational wealth, it is very difficult for me to run for office in our current political system. I have been and always will be an advocate for the most vulnerable in District 4 and throughout the entire city of Boston, and I will never trade access or waver on any policies in exchange for campaign contributions. I am committed to running an unapologetically progressive campaign that publicly holds these and other special interests accountable, and anyone donating to my campaign can expect that to be my agenda.

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

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

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1. I started immigrant workshops at the City of Boston and have supported immigrants who want to start small businesses.
2. I helped start the African Mall in Nubian Square. The mall is made up of 13 small businesses owned by immigrant and refugee entrepreneurs. I have worked to showcase their businesses and provide support to them and the larger African community.
3. I opened a dialogue between the police and Muslim youth, who are frequently targeted and profiled by law enforcement. I will continue to push for equity in the criminal justice system, and to amplify the voice of the Somali community and their concerns about the profiling of our children. As a City Councilor, I would continue to work towards police accountability in Boston, and I would make sure that immigrants and others targeted and profiled by law enforcement are aware of their rights when interacting with the police.

**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?**

I understand the complexities of our city government, and how difficult it can be for communities to access government resources. I am currently a resource liaison staff member, working to build trust between the community and city government. In my current role, I assist businesses in navigating city hall and accessing the resources they need. I have been and will always be available and accessible to my community, letting my neighbors know how best to reach me at any time.

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

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

In my eyes, the role of the City Council is to advocate and be a voice for their constituents. They must bring attention to the issues facing their communities, never compromising their values and consistently understanding what is in the best interest for the community they serve.

**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**

No.

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

In addition to the above changes, I would like to see more language access in navigating our municipal government resources. Whether it is the City Council, School Committee, or the charter itself, language access and language justice is essential for government transparency and community engagement. Even the city charter itself is 'translated' into "plain language" English, but remains inaccessible to non-English speaking Bostonians. The municipal website redirects to Google Translate, which reduces its navigability and functionality. The people of Boston speak over 140 languages, and the government should be accessible and available to all who live here.

**(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. I support the Fair Share Amendment, a resolution in favor of taxing incomes above one million dollars. I would work towards the passage of the Fair Share Amendment to the Constitution of Massachusetts by helping campaign for the ballot measure, as well as by using my platform on the City Council to advocate for the amendment before state legislators.

2. I believe that the corporate tax write-offs the city provides to incentivize large corporations is unnecessary, and causes us to miss funding opportunities. I would be in favor of re-examining this system, and making sure that corporations who choose to move to this city are paying their fair share towards our communities.

3. Another program I would work to reform is the Payment in Lieu of Tax (PILOT) Program. Boston's multi-million dollar private institutions should not be subject to more lenient tax guidelines than our working families and small businesses are.

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**(E) Education**

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

With the acknowledgement that these gaps are perpetuated in every aspect of our city, including housing, public health, economic justice and more, there is more that our schools can do to address these inequities.

Standardized testing should be de-emphasized as a metric for success. Studies have shown that this acts as an instrument of racial bias.

I would work to remove police from our schools: policing our schools does not keep our children safer - investing in resources does. I would advocate for more mental health counseling, after school programs, and professional development. School is a place where children should feel safe to learn, not feel threatened and traumatized.

One way to empower students is with teachers that reflect their diversity and lived experiences. 86% of Boston Public School students are students of color, 45% speak a language other than English at home, and 1 in 5 students has a disability.

**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. I would be in favor of a fully independently-elected school board

**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. All students, in every neighborhood should have access to the resources and opportunities that are currently concentrated in Boston's exam schools. I would be a strong advocate for equitable and predictable funding, based upon the guidelines outlined in the Student Opportunity Act. I would especially emphasize additional resources for low-income students, English language learners, and special education students.

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

People need to be made aware of the fact that a public pre-K program exists in our city. Information about this program is translated into fewer than 10 languages, but Boston Public School families speak more than 70 languages. We need to build more partnerships and connections between communities and government in order to maximize the government resources our communities can access, while increasing trust and awareness in our communities. Additionally, a lack of childcare providers to meet this demand emphasizes the need to pay these workers a livable wage, commensurate with the incredibly valuable work they do for our families.

**(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. Currently, the average overtime is 32%, with some officers earning 50% or more of their income on overtime alone. With the intention of revisiting the effects of these guidelines and hoping to continue to reduce them, I think 29% would be a good place to start.

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

There are so many changes to make to overtime reform in particular. In addition to capping individual overtime hours, I would advocate for the elimination of the minimum four-hours pay for court appearances. I would also advocate for a stronger enforcement of overtime fraud.

There are some guidelines that did not make it into the watered-down version of S.2963 that I think could be worked into contract negotiations. For example, creating systems for independent oversight and training, and more stringent use of force standards.

Finally, I would advocate for making the contract public in the interests of transparency. It is important that the public knows the conditions under which those who are sworn to serve and protect them are operating.

**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?**

I would advocate for issues of homelessness, mental health, at-risk youth or elders, and substance abuse to be redirected to other agencies, with municipal resources and professional counselors available for these functions. I would advocate for an independent oversight agency similar to the recently-created Office of Police Accountability and Transparency. In particular, any oversight agency must include civilian review of Boston residents, especially those who have experienced over-policing and police violence.

**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 believe a problem here is that the city is restricted in our ability to reduce the Boston Police Department budget, and I would address this first before proposing a specific budget. Mayor Janey has already proposed targets to reduce the budget, as did Mayor Walsh, but these have been taken as mere suggestions, with overtime projected to be \$15M over the fiscal budget for this year. This is money that we could spend elsewhere in service of our communities. Before suggesting a budget, I would work to close loopholes that allow the BPD to disregard the budget to begin with.

**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. Now more than ever, the importance of transparency in our Police Department is clear. The public has a right to know about those who take an oath to serve and protect us. This starts with easily accessible and public correspondences between the city and the union, so situations of gross misconduct cannot be covered up. As City Council, I would advocate for and empower the civilian review board to use their subpoena power, and to crack down on interference and intentional, public intimidation of civilians, including of members of our City Council as we saw recently.

**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. As City Councilor, I would transition Boston's public transportation and school busses to 100% electric, and work to reduce and ultimately eliminate fares, while making service faster and more convenient for the public. I would do this by working with the state to provide funding with taxpayer dollars rather than transit passes, which disproportionately disadvantage low-income individuals. I would make public transit a better environment for our communities by stopping police enforcement of fare evasion and work to eliminate the presence of law enforcement on public transit. Finally, I would work to create a space that is accessible to all Bostonians through universal design, with benches, space, and an intentional design that emphasizes the environment as a public resource to be used by all people to the greatest extent possible.

**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?**

The effects of climate change are already bearing down on District 4, and our response to the crisis must center our most vulnerable communities. My 3 priorities would be:

1. Transforming our schools: outfitting Boston Public School buildings to be net-zero by using good insulation, sustainable materials, and powering the buildings with renewable technologies. Boston Public School buildings are the majority of municipal buildings, so I would make this a priority in our city's response to the climate emergency. I would support electric school buses and city buses.

2. Food justice should be central to addressing both the climate crisis as well as keeping our students healthy, with nutritious and local food produced by local farmers served in our school cafeterias.

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3. I would strive to increase the number of green spaces in our communities to benefit mental and physical health, while ensuring that they would not displace residents or gentrify neighborhoods.

**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?**

When I first came to the United States, my family lived in subsidized apartments. I grew up in affordable housing, so I experienced how housing is truly unaffordable to so many Bostonians. It is so important that we work with the Boston Housing Authority and Metropolitan Housing to increase access to affordable housing. Affordable units must be based on equitable income guidelines and should have a pathway to home ownership. In addition, I want to provide home buyer education as well as credit repair education. I would work to empower institutions that prioritize home ownership in low-income communities and communities of color.

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

I believe that in addition to expanding affordable housing, we should consider city-owned land to be accessible to our communities as green spaces like parks or community gardens. District 4 and other communities experience a lack of access to green spaces, which affects the quality of life and well-being of the people who live there. Once we create these green spaces, I believe we can prevent the displacement of the communities who live here through rent control measures.

**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. I enthusiastically support a real estate transfer tax, with the condition that the affordable housing trust provides housing that is actually affordable for the people of

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District 4. In terms of the exemption threshold, I would be enthusiastic to speak with community members on this in my research, but I am not ready to commit to a threshold at this time.

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

Yes. Our city is experiencing an affordable housing and home ownership crisis, and those who cannot afford to put away for first, last, and security deposit are especially vulnerable to displacement and homelessness. I would be interested in implementing a housing board which acts as an intermediary between landlords and tenants. I would like to see this board publish a recommended maximum rent increase each year, based upon modest increases to cost of living and inflation. Tenants should have the right to refuse a rent increase if it is unreasonable, and if the landlord and tenant cannot come to an agreement, the landlord can then file an application with the independent housing board. This would prevent the unilateral pricing out, displacement, and gentrification of low-income neighborhoods.

**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 would support 33% of units in a building to be affordable, with the condition that it has to actually be affordable. Justice for all means that everyone will benefit from affordable housing, including those families who currently earn just slightly too.

**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?**

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Yes. I do support breaking up the BPDA and creating an independent public office of planning. It would require funding and collaboration with other city councilors as well as cooperation with the Mayor's office. We need transparency, and an independent office would be more transparent to the people we serve.

**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?**

As a City Councilor, I would support the allocation of resources that would enable subsidized housing tenants to become homeowners. An emphasis of my campaign is increasing home ownership with home buyer programs, community aid, and educational resources. By increasing home ownership, we can increase housing security and help build generational wealth for Boston's low-income families, helping to close the racial wealth gap.

As a neighborhood business manager at the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, I have worked for small businesses throughout the city. The role of personal credit disproportionately disadvantages low-income communities and communities of color. I believe that the city should widely share resource guidelines, in multiple languages, throughout Boston. I would advocate for a no-interest loan plan for up to \$50,000 for small businesses. Low-income communities should be prioritized for investment in small businesses, and I would work to implement programs that lift communities out of poverty.

**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)?**

In order to enforce hiring goals, I would focus on making sure construction jobs are monitored and the companies are regularly audited to ensure compliance. We must ensure that businesses retain these employees for a period of time and we should monitor their employment status. Otherwise, companies could just hire Boston residents to meet quotas and then let them go a month later. Affordable housing is closely linked to these hiring goals: if renters and low-income Bostonians are displaced to more affordable homes outside of the city, the 50% work hour threshold will no longer be an achievable goal.

**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?**

The rate of contracts awarded to minority-owned and black-owned businesses in our city is abysmal, with the data suggesting that less than one half of one percent of prime contracts in our city are awarded to Black owned businesses.

As a black business owner and a neighborhood business manager at the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, I believe I am uniquely qualified to address this crisis. I believe we can address the disparities in business ownership through

- De-emphasizing the role of personal credit in public small business loans
- Widely share resource guidelines, translated into multiple languages
- Prioritize underserved zip codes for investment
- Implement business programs for low-income communities in particular

**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.

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- 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?**

These inequities were created by policy, and can only be addressed through it. The City of Boston can implement the following to create equity in the cannabis industry and ensure that the communities most impacted by the war on drugs are able to benefit: Invest in businesses owned by those most impacted by the war on drugs. Conduct outreach, letting communities know how they can expunge criminal records. Create resources to help communities enter the cannabis market, which is in many ways still emerging. Build safe consumption sites for residents of section 8 housing, since cannabis use remains grounds for eviction under federal law and in federally-funded housing. There are so many laws from the war on drugs that have created lasting effects throughout our communities. As City Councilor, I would dive into the policy and listen to the community in my response.

- 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?**

Redistricting in our city must be by the people and for the people. This includes engaging communities that may not be as civically involved, especially those with low voter turnout. The process must ensure that there is no gerrymandering by way of cracking or packing of communities of color or low income communities in these districts. At every step of the way, we must work to ensure that our elected representation truly represents the people of this city.

- 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**

I have a deep and personal understanding of the ways in which so many forms of justice intersect with immigration, language access, economic opportunity, racial justice, housing and health. Marginalized communities are harmed by healthcare, economic, educational, environmental injustice, while the channels available to advocate on behalf of their communities are frequently inaccessible to them. If I am elected to the City Council, I will commit to creating spaces where immigrants, low-income communities and communities of color feel welcome in advocating for their communities. I would make sure to be a voice for them on the council and before our state and federal delegation.