

2021 Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

Mental Health & Substance Use, Housing, and COVID-19 Recovery

6. What qualifies you to hold this office?

For years now, people have been encouraging me to run for office here in Boston. I haven't done it because I am a lifelong community activist, I've always been focused on the work over the "politics" of the work. However, as we look to a brighter future complete with the COVID-19 vaccines in arms, opened businesses, and in-person learning - our city must endure a period of healing and recovery. In this period, the Boston city council needs the voice, perspective, and lived experience of a social worker to guide our city to ensure every voice in Boston is heard.

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

The Cahoots program in Eugene and Springfield, Oregon is a wonderful example of what public safety could look like and something that could be built upon here in Boston. In this example, 911 calls concerning situations that do not call for the response of armed police officers such as responding to homeless communities, substance use, or mentally ill persons are rerouted away from the police and to the Cahoots responders.

Our city has already made commitments to expanding a co-responder model, now we need to expand far beyond the 15 social workers the program started with. Taking cues from the Cahoots model, this program should be housed external to the BPD and

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receive more funding to re-route more calls, hire more responders, and send more resources towards this program and away from police officers. For the safety of our crisis responders, I would be in favor of retaining a hybrid model for the beginning of this program and letting the research and results guide us towards phasing away armed officers on these calls.

8. 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 am accepting campaign contributions from individual police officers however, I will reject money from police unions. There are many police officers that I know and work within the community that are excited about police reform and I do not want to alienate their voices in this process.

(B) Racial Equity & Community Engagement

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

(1) Founder and President of the Cape Verdean Social Workers Association to address the stigma around mental health within the Cape Verdean community by bringing together social workers who speak our language and look like our young people.

(2) Co-chair the social worker racial justice committee at Brigham and Women's Hospital and serves on the criminal justice and legislative advocacy committee at NASW where I not only bring essential perspectives of diversity as a Black woman and single mother but advocate fiercely for social workers to be involved in policy advocacy. Through this work, I testified at the State House in support of the Driving Families Forward act.

(3) Sought out the opportunity to work with incarcerated men and women at the Suffolk County House of Correction and Nashua Street Jail where I not only provided desperately needed therapeutic support for the incarcerated individuals and worked to identify reentry or job placement programs for them upon release but also connected with their family members to provide them the same supports and connections to services to provide holistic community counseling.

4. 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?

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I will engage all of the communities of Boston the same way I always have, by being present, by listening, and by matching services to needs. You'd be hard-pressed to find a harder working profession than social workers. Boston residents will see my work ethic throughout this campaign, learn of my track record, and they will see it in action when I'm a member of the city council. My values of service, justice, and inclusion led me to aid refugee families at the border of Mexico, provide therapeutic services to incarcerated men and women, and go door to door to deliver basic needs to thousands of residents during the peak of the pandemic. My commitment to those in need will never stop.

(C) Charter Reform & Balance of Power

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

I see the role of our city council as a more direct voice for the people of Boston, we are their natural conduit to the municipal decision-making process. It's imperative we all listen to constituents and provide services to meet their identified needs. With the Mayor, whoever they are, we must engage in dialogue, challenge one another, and lean into the discomfort of disagreement. To deliver a Boston where everyone's basic needs are met, we must find the conviction to push, challenge, and question one another and find the resolve to stand our ground for what the people need. Ultimately, the city council must hold the mayor accountable.

7. 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.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

There are lots of innovative and important city government changes that should be looked at, including all of the above changes. Others that come to mind include creating a city-level Inspect General (IG) position as well as adopting smaller changes that could make the city government more open, accessible, and transparent. Both the IG position

and reforms to publicize more data and steps of the decision-making process would go a long way to strengthening public trust in our city government.

(D) Revenue

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

Yes.

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

PILOT is the most significant opportunity that we must not only look at but embrace, monitor, and enforce. In addition, there are plenty of avenues that deserve being explored and no opportunity to raise progressive revenue should be seen as too small. Corporations must be not only expected to but accountable for paying their fair share in taxes. We must reassess the corporate tax break incentives we are providing for corporations to relocate in Boston because we are a vibrant city with a well-educated workforce, corporations want to be here already. In the housing and development sector, there are many opportunities including the real estate transfer tax.

(E) Education

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

Any and all solutions related to our schools must begin with listening to Boston's students, teachers, and parents. Our students and teachers are a wealth of knowledge when it comes to solving problems they navigate every day in our schools. Our parents bring in the holistic perspective of what our communities need to thrive. Without a doubt, our schools need more funding, especially our historically underserved schools in BIPOC communities. We must prioritize investments in public education as we raise new revenue from the SOA, Fair Share Amendment, and any that we can raise as a city. Lastly, we know schools are not a microcosm but rather a reflection of the lived experiences of those within their walls. Housing and food security, healthcare access and affordability, adult education programs, and violence prevention just to name a few all ultimately impact our students' overall ability to learn.

- 8. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools in Boston? YES/ NO**

Yes.

9. 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. This is a very common-sense change that must be implemented here in Boston. I'm open to a hybrid model with elected and appointed members to the committee but believe we should have a robust assessment of all potential structures. Whatever the outcome, the student member must be a full voting member. As a working-class person of color running for office, I know firsthand just how challenging it is to run for office - particularly from a financial standpoint. Taking on school committee reform requires that we look at how the elections themselves and their campaign finance rules do not put up racial or economic barriers for anyone in the city to run for office. This would include assurances that the school committee members represent Boston's diverse students, teachers, and neighborhoods.

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

Yes. The way young people and police interact with each other needs to change. I believe we need to foster these relationships in a positive way. Boston public schools must hire more social workers to support students with issues that affect them daily.

11. 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. In the interim, the research I've seen would seem to suggest that using the 5th-grade MCAS scores as a baseline to invitation would at least close the racial gap of exam school application and invitation rates. That being said, all standardized tests are problematic and particularly biased against our BIPOC students and especially our ESL students. We must continue to look into and assess longer-term solutions as we take steps that bring us closer to equity.

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

Our current pre-k system is rife with inequity as wealthier, well-connected families are more easily able to get their children enrolled in pre-k. Two changes I support to address these inequities are: 1) merging the registration process for school and community center-based pre-k to eliminate the two-tiered system, and 2) better publicize, communicate, and amplify the existing pre-k options for Bostonians - especially non-english speakers and Black and Brown families. This information needs to be brought where families are, in community, and be delivered in multiple languages. Expanding this program to make it truly universal will require more money for investment which we must continue to try to get from the state legislature and continue to try to raise ourselves. We can bring ourselves closer to this reality by looking closely at our city

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budget for where funds can be reallocated - such as from BPD's budget - and by raising more progressive revenue locally.

(F) Public Safety

13. 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.

14. 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.

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

Yes.

16. 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.

17. Do you support shuttering the Boston Police gang database? YES/ NO

Yes.

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

No. In my neighborhood and neighborhoods across the city suffering from the public health crisis of gun violence, many of our neighbors are asking for more police presence to disrupt gang activity. Reimagining public safety will be a top issue for me but I do not see capping individual officers as the issue or solution. Rather, overtime abuse and the incredible percentage of BPD's budget spent on overtime will be handled at the negotiating table with BPPA, not by a rule targeting individual officers.

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

I look forward to reviewing more ideas and options for changing the BPPA contract to create a system of true public safety here in Boston. Two ideas I support now include:

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- Overall overtime reform. The history of criminal charges linked to officers abusing overtime and supervisors approving that malpractice makes it plain and clear that the current provisions in the contract make fraud all around too easy. For example, the contract mandated four hours of overtime for court appearances.
- Body cameras absolutely must become much more common practice and should be a requirement in order to work overtime hours. Our officers do not have to wear body cameras while working overtime and I believe we must rectify that.
- We also need to make sure that residents' voices are at the bargaining table to advocate for where they see gaps in BPD presence in their neighborhoods.

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

Responding to calls relative to homeless populations, substance use, and mental health crises would be better served by the hybrid police-social worker model I proposed above. Innovations such as this one should live under the watch of The Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice. Civilians can take on many more responsibilities currently falling on our overburdened police force including, supervising community resource centers, and supporting officers in foot patrols. Engaging civilians in public safety is an essential step towards ensuring everyone feels safe, welcomed, and responsible for their community. I will remain open to hearing more options to engage civilians in public safety and easing the burden on our police force.

21. 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. As we've already seen with the budget and BPD overtime spending this year, changing the budget and reallocating funds is important but accountability and getting spending under control through oversight are essential. That being said, I would be comfortable with the 10% number we've seen discussed but happy to hear arguments for increasing that amount. So many of our crucial services such as schools, public transportation, mental health, and substance use programs, all require more revenue currently being held captive by the inflated BPD budget and inability to control overtime costs.

22. 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.

23. 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. White supremacist ideas and sympathies permeate every institution in our society, BPD is no exception and we must be comfortable calling this out. The recent Patrick Rose criminal charges and news story alerted the entire city to the need for transparency and accountability from BPD and our city government. Information about whether a Boston

police officer was present for the Jan 6th attack on the US Capitol has yet to be resolved. This culture of secrecy which has not been properly combatted by our City government must be abolished within BPD and find no protection within our city government. I will be a loud and vocal advocate for this increased transparency and accountability as a councilor, in community, and in collaboration with the Mayor.

24. Do you support safe consumption sites? YES/ NO

Yes.

(G) Environment & Transportation

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

Yes. Boston has made great strides in terms of making our city accessible for folks to get around in whatever method they choose. We must continue to build on this momentum and do so with an eye towards equity. Where I live, access to walking paths and protected bike lanes is inadequate in comparison to what I see across the city. In addition to this, we must make public transportation fare-free. Working people, mostly BIPOC, should not be penalized for their use of public transportation by having to be able to afford to use it. Public transportation should be a public good provided by the city and state for free as a way to incentivize folks into using it. From there, we must fortify that public transit system to ensure it is reliable, in a state of good repair, and able to meet the needs of all who want to use it.

7. 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?

I will ensure equity is the cornerstone of the council's climate advocacy by ensuring our community members are present, heard, and listened to in the process. I support a Boston green new deal and as we deliberate what that looks like, I will rely on my social work training to look at the policy through multiple lenses. Three policies at this time are:

- Investments in our urban canopy. Living with asthma in one of Boston's heat islands, I know the importance of tree coverage for carbon sequestration, keeping residents cool and our air clean, and that private developers must contribute as well.

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- Making the T and all busses fare-free. This will incentivize greater use of public transportation and advance equity because we know the majority of those who use it are working-class BIPOC folks.

- Urban Climate Corps. A great idea to address much of what I saw growing up, a lack of jobs in BIPOC communities. It could focus on youth, neighborhood residents, and previously incarcerated individuals to provide them the skills and training needed to implement a city-level green new deal.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

(H) Housing

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

The city and our municipal government have many avenues by which we can pursue a Boston where everyone can afford to meet their housing goals - whether that be homeownership or renting. I am excited to hear more thoughts and opportunities to achieve these goals from residents, community organizations, and activists. A few options that have my attention are:

- Invest in greater use of Community Land Trusts by leveraging zoning changes and tax incentives

- Give the Department of Neighborhood Development jurisdiction over and instructions to prioritize cooperative property ownership models by both nonprofits and residents

- Strengthen the rights of renters and their opportunities to purchase or refuse purchase if their landlord wants to sell

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

Boston has an incredible capacity to provide affordable and accessible housing right here in the city for all our residents. Let's start by capitalizing on the potential of all the vacant lots across the city, foreclosed properties, and other publicly held lands not yet

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activated for affordable housing development. Putting this property into the hands of residents and neighborhood non-profits is a no-brainer for a city prioritizing people over profits. Combine this with increasing, monitoring, and enforcing the minimum percentage of affordable units in every development project. Then add in increased, multilingual community outreach and education about existing services and programs that lead to homeownership like the ones I took advantage of more than a decade ago. This problem is massive but these are meaningful steps along the way.

13. 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. If the research indicates that an exemption threshold would protect working people and make the tax overall more progressive, I would be in favor of one. I don't have a recommendation for what that threshold might be at this time.

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

Yes. Providing options and flexibility in how we roll out rent control is key. The "Tenant Protection Act" filed by Reps Connolly and Elugardo lays out a good framework that includes protections for owner-occupied dwellings with three or fewer units and regulations to strengthen the position of tenants when a landlord wants to convert units to condos.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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 am interested in pursuing 50%, if this is supposed to be mixed-income housing then let's make sure it's true to that title. I remain open to hearing more research on the case for this number being higher or lower.

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18. 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.

19. 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 want to be very careful with dismantling the BPDA to ensure that in this very precarious moment for Boston - a new Mayor coming in, coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a coastal city facing extinction-level climate crisis - we do not abolish it without an interim plan. The agency as it stands lacks the trust of Bostonians and that is reason enough to do away with it, in preparation for this there are many hearings to be had and data to be released. As a member of the council, I will push my colleagues to begin this process straightaway in collaboration with the Mayor's office.

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

Yes.

(I) Economic Opportunity

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

There are countless reasons for our current racial wealth gap, reasons rooted in systemic racism and intentional choice to disadvantage people of color. Some of these steps have already been discussed but a few ideas I would be in favor of pursuing include:

- Greater promotion and investment in homeownership programs like the ones I took advantage of to empower BIPOC folks to own here in Boston

- Greater promotion and investment in adult education resources like the ones I received to ensure Bostonians of all ages can be active learners and attain new skills if they are so inclined to do so

- Urban Climate Corps focused on youth, neighborhood members, and recently incarcerated individuals

9. 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

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Yes.

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

Yes.

11. 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)?

A system or practice that disadvantages historically oppressed groups by necessity advantages, somebody. There are many bad actors in the Boston development space including but not limited to companies and subcontractors who have a history of non-compliance with BJRP as well as committing other predatory practices such as wage theft and OSHA violations. One good idea I've seen out there is updating our definition of the word "responsible" in our Public Bid Law. Right now, that definition does not cover a company or subcontractors' history of BRJP compliance. Non-compliant companies can not be viewed as "responsible" stewards for construction in the city of Boston and must not be awarded contracts.

12. 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?

Given the long history of racism in the city of Boston, it should come as no surprise that the city missed its contracting goals when these goals were not being robustly monitored or publicly reported on. Racist systems designed to exclude people of color will not change in the darkness, they will only change when there is transparency, accountability, and light. So now the spotlight is on Boston and we must raise the bar. I know the capacity there is out there, I'm a member of several community organizations that gather Black Boston business owners who are deserving of these city contracts. I support raising the goals, continuing the regular reporting, and both continuing and increasing the investments recently made to assist Boston's Black-owned business to navigate the application process and be eligible for these contracts.

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.

- 13. 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?**

The city must approach the cannabis industry as a form of restorative justice. As the cannabis industry continues to grow, bad actors will continue to flock to the Boston market as they already have with hopes of turning profits in our communities. I will always put people over profits and prioritize contracts to BIPOC owners while weighing their commitments to hire locally, hire formerly incarcerated individuals, community feedback, and what they're committed to paying folks. I will also listen to the calls from business owners and advocates who have been saying the process is not equitable enough and work to rectify their concerns.

- 14. Would you support the creation of a municipal broadband network? YES/ NO**

Yes.

(J) Democracy

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

An equitable redistricting process would bring in constituents, I would like to see an independent body be brought in and for the process to be transparent and accessible for Bostonians to hear, see, and comment on.

- 8. 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**

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Yes.

(K) Additional Comments

As a social worker, I want to take this moment to acknowledge the lack of questions about mental health in not only this questionnaire but as a topic in our wider society well. As an emergency psychiatric social worker at Boston Children's Hospital, I know without a shadow of a doubt that our city is experiencing an unprecedented mental health crisis. I pledge to bring a mental health movement to city hall and as a Black woman living with anxiety, working as a social worker, and advocating for mental health issues I know how incredibly powerful visibility for this issue is - especially within BIPOC communities.

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