

2021 Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Kelly Ransom

Office Sought: Boston City Council District Six

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

1. End family homelessness in Boston in less than 5 years
2. Increase the City's technical & financial assistance to small businesses and entrepreneurs while removing barriers for Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE), Black, Indigenous, and People of Color entrepreneurs
3. Push for more mixed-income/use developments & supportive housing in District Six

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

1. As a queer, previously homeless, Bostonian woman who has lived in poverty and with housing instability, my lived experience is not unique. Much like many of the constituents I will serve, I am one paycheck away from homelessness, and I live in fear of that fact every day.
2. My professional & volunteer experience as an LGBTQIA+ activist, restaurant industry worker, community development organization employee, and Boston City Council staffer also qualifies me to hold this office. Because of my City Hall experience, I can get to work on day one.
3. My dedication to District Six. I have lived, worked, or volunteered in District Six for my whole life. I am committed to my neighbors and making sure that their voices are heard, their needs are met, and their quality of life is constantly being improved.

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

In San Francisco, CA, they implemented a Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund for small businesses 20-30+ years old that have significantly contributed to the cultural fabric of their neighborhoods. Their fund offers \$500 for every full-time employee and \$4.50 per square foot to the property owners leasing these businesses' spaces if they provide 10+ year leases. I would like to see this adopted in Boston to prevent the further shuttering of the legacy businesses that make Boston the historic & unique city that it is. This would be the first policy I see through in office in honor of Bella Luna Restaurant & Milky Way Lounge.

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)

Fossil fuel executives or lobbyists, Charter school advocates and lobbyists. I will not take contributions from police unions.

(B) Racial Equity & Community Engagement

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

Through my work in community service, I have worked for Black and Brown people to have equitable access to spaces from which they have been racially excluded. I have done this by building up the capacity of Black & Brown vendors contracted for galas, festivals, and community events, freely offering my communications & marketing expertise to low-income entrepreneurs of color, and advocating for equitable housing policies and economic justice in low-income communities of color.

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 will work with my team to increase knowledge around development, affordable housing, and how the City process works for zoning, licensing, and BPDA approval in District Six and bring those voices to community meetings when cannot be there. I refuse to be a part of any policy, any budget decision, any movement within the City without the people directly affected by the decisions by my side.

Most of my work (paid and unpaid) has involved a community process. I made sure a community process planned the Latin Quarter World's Fair. My office will ensure an

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equitable & just community process for decisions that the entire community should be part of (development, construction, etc.)

Anyone who has worked with me or knows me can attest that I show up over and over and over again to work for a communities' vision to come to fruition.

(C) Charter Reform & Balance of Power

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

The City should make changes to the City Charter for the City Council to propose a budget that reflects the specific needs of each District. For an equitable City budget, we need to include the voices & views of the people and establish a participatory budgeting process. Equity cannot be accomplished without elected officials working to alleviate disparities.

A Councilor's primary role is providing constituent services. Advocating for policy change at the State & City level is constituent services. A City Councilor creates close working relationships with the people who live, work & play in their District. It's their job to listen & act on a granular level for constituents.

The Council must push for a participatory budgeting process, so the system is less mayor-strong, and all voices are included. That is constituent service at its best.

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?

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(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?**

Increasing the Linkage square footage trigger for commercial, office, and lab buildings. Right now, Linkage isn't triggered for developments under 100,000 square feet. It should be triggered at a lower number of square footage (80,000, perhaps). We could also increase the fee from \$10.81 per square foot to \$15+ per square foot. This would only increase funding for affordable housing and workforce development.

Instituting a charge for the disposal of food waste. This would promote environmentally responsible behavior, increase composting, and perhaps, increase food for food rescue programs in Boston. This would need to be done equitably and not with any charge or burden to low-income families or individuals. The revenue stream from the food waste disposal charge could perhaps start with Boston's largest institutions and commercial operations.

Implementing red light cameras would reduce the need for police traffic enforcement and increase revenue for the City.

(E) Education

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

Demand that the Student Opportunities Act be fully funded to ensure all schools have the funding to be equitable, accessible, safe, green, and healthy environments for students.

Continue the fight for fully funded holistic health & wellness services, including a school nurse and mental & behavioral health professionals in every school.

Work with partners on the Family Led Stability Pilot to house families experiencing homelessness & provide wraparound prevention services in all Boston Public Schools

Remove law enforcement in our schools and, instead, increase the number of substitute nurses and teachers, hire more psychologists, social workers, custodians, and other staff to inclusively support all students.

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

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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 believe the ideal structure of the school committee is made up of both elected and appointed members.

- 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. For now, I support the new system of the first 20% of exam school seats going to top-performing students citywide based on GPAs with the remaining seats divided by ZIP code, with lower-income ZIP codes given the highest priority. I want to see how that works out after this first year of implementation and hold a hearing with students, parents, faculty, and educators to hear their experiences after this year. The GPA strategy is complicated because all of our schools are not operating at a baseline. For this to be a truly equitable process, the BPS system needs reform.

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

An equitable Boston includes publicly funded early education. Boston will need more funding from the state to make universal pre-K a reality successfully. Pre-K should be offered for free for low-income families and on a sliding scale for middle-income earners. I support the Fair Share Amendment that is presently going forward for a vote in the legislature, which would create an additional revenue stream for the state and could fund 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**

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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. 33%

- 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 must be increased transparency and accountability for the police body cam program.

There needs to be easier access to data & records so that officers are held accountable for their actions and not hidden away from the public.

There must be mandatory and extensive implicit bias training for all existing and new officers & BPD staff.

- 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?**

Implementing red light cameras would reduce the need for police traffic enforcement and increase revenue for the City.

Construction details should be transferred to the jurisdiction of ISD. Training and licensure should be run in collaboration with the Boston Police Dept. and the trade unions.

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Traffic stops by police for minor infractions (expired sticker, etc.) should be handled by ticketing via mail to reduce the chances of confrontation and helps save lives on both ends.

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

Yes. 20%

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. There must be absolutely zero-tolerance for this and any officer displaying such affiliations or sympathies should be discharged immediately.

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

Yes. One of my priorities is to establish more comfort spaces in partnership with the Boston Public Health Commission for our neighbors living with substance abuse disorder

(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?

Absolutely. I have never owned a car, and my family did not own a car. We relied solely on public transit to do everything. This was not easy, and doing a task that would be simple for someone with a car, like grocery shopping, was an all-day affair & challenge for my family. We lived on Washington Street in West Roxbury, and, even today, the nearest grocery store is not walkable.

I propose:

Boston increases affordable housing developments near public transit

Boston make every neighborhood a 15-minute neighborhood and prioritize low-income communities during this endeavor.

Boston lower or remove parking minimums for new developments

Boston invest in complete & liveable streets

Boston invest in providing fair liveable wages for people to afford to live & work in the city so that cars are not required to drive in & out of town

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

1 Boston must invest in net-zero housing and development. It lowers the costs of utility bills for residents and creates healthier living environments.

Add foliage and green canopies to lower the temp of Boston in the summer and prevent heat from impacting low-income communities that are more cement-heavy.

If we are building more densely and create 15 min neighborhoods, we allow for more walking accessible neighborhoods and cut down on car dependence The City needs neighborhoods as accessible as possible while we wait for the Commonwealth to fund fare-free transit.

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. Very little of the MBTAs budget comes from fare collection. The State needs to invest in fare-free transit. The city alone can't change this, but we can advocate for change.

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

Yes. One of my priorities is to continue the push for the development and expansion of the City's Project Oscar Pilot Program to bring Boston one step closer to our Zero Waste goal through composting.

(H) Housing

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

I will be proactive in my partnerships with Community Development Corporations & affordable housing developers at City Hall. There is more that can be done than just providing a letter of support to advocate for their projects.

We have an opportunity to further explore how to include a preference for people who live in or have lived in/were displaced from in the housing lottery process. Having this exemption in place could minimize displacement.

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

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We should be taking advantage of increasing the height of our city-owned buildings. The Housing Innovation Lab is exploring adding housing above public amenities like libraries. The City should be exploring adding units on top of municipal buildings. There are many opportunities to leverage city land and partnerships for affordable housing through increasing height.

- 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 support the HERO Coalition's proposal to double the current Deeds Excise Tax (from \$4.56 per \$1,000 to \$9.12 per \$1,000), upon the sale of real property in Massachusetts, to generate approximately \$300 million in new revenue each year.

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

Yes. I support rent stabilization. Not "control" the current legislation allows for increases in rent at reasonable levels. It's humane and necessary for keeping people in their homes and in their neighborhood.

- 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. 23%.

- 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?

. I am still learning about this and exploring the possibilities. I do support the separation of planning from development.

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?

This is structural inequity. Baby bond funding is a good step toward breaking the cycle.

The City should be proactively approaching Black/POC businesses to operate in Boston. Let's meet them where they are instead of waiting for them to approach us.

We should further fund and staff a small business technical assistance program.

I support a Universal Basic Income pilot program in Boston.

I support the STASH program which could close the wealth gap with State funded matched savings accounts.

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. I will serve as the champion for the survival, stability, and continued growth of the foodservice, restaurant & hospitality industry in Boston for business owners & end subminimum wages their employees.

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

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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)?

Madison Park Development Corporation has taken this issue on, and I believe it could be a model for the rest of the City. We have a member (sometimes 2) of our staff who goes out to the construction sites in Roxbury and checks, nearly every day, to see who is working on the site and where they live (looking for Boston residency). If the site is not meeting the minimums, they are given time to correct and, if they don't or can prove they've made a best faith effort, they are reported to the BJRP office.

Designated monitors checking on development sites in every neighborhood. would make it easier to hold contractors accountable for not meeting the requirements. I have been working with & learning from Katrina Conrad and believe her experience and knowledge on this subject are invaluable. Her ideas for enforcing the BJRP's goals by expanding the monitoring efforts of the City is a model I will advocate for. I will continue to work with her and follow her guidance on this subject as a City Councilor.

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 City of Boston should rectify the inequities in city contracting by allowing MWBE/Black-owned businesses to be granted contracts without going through the formal competitive process of having the lowest bid. I would advocate for the lifting of the traditional competitive process for MWBE/Black-owned businesses in reparation of the inequities they have already faced in terms of City contracts.

I am concerned that the 25% target that Mayor Walsh ordered Mayor Walsh won't effectively and equitably serve Black-owned businesses. 15% of that 25% is targeted towards women, and 10% is targeted towards minority-owned. The gray areas concern me when it comes to ensuring Black-owned businesses get an equal shot at these contracts.

I have learned from Black women entrepreneurs that the MWBE process is yet another hurdle they have to jump over to get their business up and running, and some avoid the process altogether. MWBE certification should be an immediate part of starting a business in Boston. It should not be an additional barrier. I would also like to call a hearing for a full report on MWBEs in Boston and improve the process for becoming certified.

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

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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?**

With the creation of Boston's Cannabis Board, I believe the City will create a system that ensures racial equity & inclusion in the cannabis industry. I expect the board to support local ownership, equity, and diversity in Boston's growing cannabis industry. I think that the communities most impacted by the drug war would benefit MOST from the decriminalization of drugs but that is a separate conversation. It is imperative that those impacted communities are included during every step the City takes on this matter.

- 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. With the condition that there will be stronger civics curriculums in our schools.

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

Boston must ensure the process of drawing districts is impartial so that our government can truly be of, by, and for the people. This needs to be a bipartisan process that includes the voices of every person in Boston. An independent commission should handle redistricting.

- 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**

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Yes.

(K) Additional Comments