



Progressive Newton 2023 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

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1. Did you support the three override votes on the ballot this past spring? If not, why?

Yes. I supported the three override questions. The proposed overrides were critical to Newton staying financially strong while maintaining our commitment to excellent schools and services as well as being good stewards of our many community assets. Years of expense reductions caused by the artificially low property tax growth allowed by Prop 2 ½ have left important community assets and infrastructure suffering. There are many city expenses that are rising faster than property taxes: health care, transportation, road repaving, and out-of-district tuition to name a few. Add to that state and federal mandates and other problems we can no longer put off: fully funding the pension liabilities, phosphorus reductions for stormwater, making our streets safer, and making Newton more senior-friendly. Lastly, I would note that surrounding communities like Wellesley, Needham, Weston, Concord and Lexington have been significantly increasing taxes via overrides for many years.

2. Following the Override votes, what concrete actions will you take to ensure that NPS students have the greatest opportunities to succeed? Additionally, how do you define “academic excellence”?

After the failure of the operating override, I supported efforts to extend the timeline on fully funding the pension by a few years to free up more funds now for the schools. While the final budget the City Council voted on had only a slightly extended timeline, it did reduce some of the necessary budget cuts for the schools. As for supporting our students, I will continue to vote to upgrade school buildings and facilities to meet the needs of students and staff. This includes school playgrounds, an important learning facility, that all too frequently fail to meet the accessibility needs of students with disabilities. “Academic excellence” means that every student is given the opportunity to achieve their academic best.

3. On March 29th, the School Committee voted against the creation of a “NPS Academic Principles Advisory Committee.” What is your stance on this vote and the proposed committee?

I did not support the creation of a “NPS Academic Principles Advisory Committee” and I am mostly proud of the School Committee’s actions that night. Establishing academic principles and developing curriculum is the responsibility of the Superintendent of NPS and the eight elected School Committee members are responsible for oversight of the superintendent.

4. What does “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” mean to you, and how will you ensure and protect the wellbeing of all students?

Diversity means that everyone has things about us that make us different: age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, ability, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation and more. Equity is the principle that regardless of differences everyone deserves the same opportunities to live and thrive. And inclusion is the act of being welcoming, opening the circle, setting a place at the table. DEI together is the commitment to addressing the systemic issues that keep people from reaching their potential and limit what we can achieve as a community. As a City Councilor, I support continued efforts to build more housing. The housing shortage in Newton means every year our city gets less diverse: racially, economically, and age-wise, including a continued decline in the student population. I also support programs like Empath which is working with some of our lowest-income families to improve their economic opportunities. I also support the creation of a staff position dedicated to advancing DEI initiatives in the city.

5. What does “Black Lives Matter” mean to you?

Black Lives Matter is recognizing that the Black members of our society face significant discrimination by the institutions that should be nurturing them and keeping them safe. This goes beyond the judicial system including education, healthcare, housing, and financial. The statistics are sobering. Black Lives Matter is also recognizing that many people who face discrimination are not Black, but that should not keep anyone from recognizing the need to address discrimination against people in the Black community.

6. How would you improve access to affordable transportation in Newton?

Transportation is one of the more complex issues in our community. While personal vehicles remain the primary way most people in Newton get around, this is a cost burden far beyond what many families can afford. The best way to promote affordable transportation is to make it easier to live car-free or car-lite (one car in the house), with the average car in Massachusetts costing over \$10,000 a year. Reducing dependency on a car is easiest achieved by making Newton more walkable, bikeable and access to public transportation. These efforts should be focused on accessibility, frequency, reliability and of course safety. I also recognize that for the foreseeable future, there will be a need for vehicle trips and the city's NewMo program should be recognized for its support of seniors and students and others in our community with an affordable, shared vehicle service. NewMo is primarily funded by fees from new development. Another city service that benefits residents, including lower-income residents, is BlueBikes which is also partially funded by new development fees. As a City Councilor, I will continue to support the continuation and expansion of NewMo and BlueBike.

7. What concrete steps will you take to combat global climate change, increase renewable energy, and decrease energy consumption in Newton?

As a City Councilor, I pushed projects to increase sustainability including reduced parking and greener building practices (electrification, solar panels, passive house). I supported full electrification of new and substantially renovated buildings. Newton will be one of ten communities to trial this, starting January 2024. I also supported adopting the specialized stretch code, increasing building sustainability for all buildings. I support Newton's zoning redesign to enable more multi-family housing in our walkable, transit-available neighborhoods. I authored the budget resolution in 2021 and am now working on the committee for Newton's first Bike & Pedestrian Master Plan whose goals include helping to transition more vehicle trips to bike and walking trips. This is critical as transportation is 30+% of GHG and rising. I support the

continued work to add solar panels to city buildings, not only reducing utility costs but resilience with the opportunity to have local sources of energy during grid disruptions.

8. What value do you place on increasing affordable housing in Newton, and what concrete steps will you take to expand affordable housing?

Creating more housing, especially affordable housing in Newton is critical to addressing the needs of many in our community already, including the growing senior population. Creating more affordable housing will also enable Newton to live up to its obligations under the Fair Housing Act to affirmatively further fair housing. Affordable housing is also good for local businesses. I supported the creation of the Affordable Housing Trust and now serve as the Council appointee to the AHT. The AHT will allow the city to take a more active role in the creation of deeply affordable units, a critical need in Newton. I also support provisions in the Village Center zoning and MBTA zoning to incentivize affordable housing development. And as a member of Land Use, I am a positive voice for housing and especially affordable housing.

9. What is your definition of public safety? What actions will you take to further this definition in Newton?

Public safety are people and actions that help to keep the public safe. Public safety is the police department responding to serious crashes and crimes, the fire department responding to fires and continuing to lead on fire prevention, and EMS responding to medical emergencies. But public safety is also investing in traffic calming, increasing access to mental health services and substance abuse programs, supporting survivors of intimate partner violence, making our parks and public places accessible, working with our youngest and oldest residents to ensure they are active and engaged members of our community and so much more. As a City Councilor I will continue to support this expanded vision of public safety and the need to invest in more services.

10. What do you believe is the role of local elected leaders in promoting progressive policies at the state and national level?

I think that it is important to work with our state and national leaders on progressive policies, especially as we see that legislation at the state and national level can be more effective in meeting goals (such as modifications in building standards or rebates for transitioning to clean energy).

11. Use this space to add anything you have not mentioned and that you would like us to know about your experience, vision for Newton, etc.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about my opinions on important issues facing Newton including climate change, strong schools and housing affordability. These are complex issues that must be dealt with. Newton needs City Councilors who understand these issues and are willing and able to work with other councilors, the administration, advocates and residents to build consensus and move forward.

YES/NO (Massachusetts state legislature bill numbers follow in parentheses, where applicable)

1. Do you support lowering the municipal voting age to 16?

YES.

2. If the MBTA is unable to expand service, would you be in favor of having the MWRTA (MetroWest Regional Transit Authority) expand service instead?

YES.

3. Do you support the “Real Estate Transfer Fee”? (S.1771/H.2747)

YES.

4. Do you support the “HERO bill”? (S.1799/ H.2894)

YES.

5. Do you support “An Act to Promote Yes in My Backyard”? (S.858/ H.1379)

YES.

6. Do you support raising the minimum wage to \$20? (S.1200/ H.1925)

YES.

7. Do you support “Preventing Fair Share Amendment Tax Avoidance”? (S.1866/H.2909)

YES.

[Read about the aforementioned bills here](#)