



Progressive Newton 2023 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Andreae Downs

Office Sought: Ward 5 Councilor At-Large

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

Yes. I supported all three, and I knocked on doors and talked to neighbors about it. I also included my reasoning in my newsletter (see updates www.andreae4newton.org).

- 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”?**

Our schools remain Newton’s crown jewel, but without funding for aides, teacher raises, materials and more, their sustainability at the highest level is endangered. The schools are the heart of our community; they are also where (we hope) every child is challenged to be their best—academically, socially, civically, and more. Actual school governance, by state law, is centered on each principal & building—and hiring of these is up to the superintendent. Hiring and supervising the superintendent, making policy and budget decisions, is the job of the elected school committee. As a city councilor, I

advocate for the schools' funding and can give them my moral support—but I am not empowered to take “concrete actions” on school matters.

“Academic excellence” is not just test scores or number of AP classes offered. I wrote an article about it in 2000— [Successful School Reform Efforts Share Common Features](#).

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 testified against the committee (as I had just been exposed to COVID, I did so remotely). I am glad the School Committee took the vote it did.

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

See above about the role of City Council & schools. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion also apply to my work on the City Council, and in life—it means respecting and including many voices and paying particular attention to those voices that are traditionally marginalized or silent. I am continuing to learn more about this and how to be more inclusive and to promote more voices and more diversity in my work with the city. I believe this is an ongoing journey.

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

In much of US and Western colonial history, and through to the present moment, the lives of people of color, and particularly Black people in America, have been treated as less valuable than white lives. This cry in 2020 was meant to stress that these unequal practices needed to stop, and that we needed to pay attention to how disproportionately Black people suffered injury and death at the hands of authorities.

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

I have been an advocate for better, more frequent T service for longer than I have been on the council. I have also lobbied for fully accessible stations, bus shelters, and better transit funding.

Similarly, I support and have docketed legislation for bike lanes for safer travel on two wheels (and other small devices, including wheelchairs) on Newton's

streets, better pedestrian connections and crossings, and have been working for the last 4 years on the School Transportation Working Group to make it safer to walk, bike and roll to Newton's 15 elementary, 4 middle, and 2 high schools—as well as our early childhood education center. I support having a safe, connected bike and pedestrian network that is also accessible.

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

Council is continually improving the ways Newton can contribute to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. I have voted for the following:

- Adopting the enhanced stretch code for buildings (higher efficiency)
- Zoning changes that make insulation and solar panel installation more possible
- Waiving costly parking mandates for homes and businesses (I am advocating for their elimination in village center zoning)
- Flood mitigating green infrastructure in street and park improvements—that also cleans up the stormwater
- Green transportation options (see #6)
- Public EV charging stations
- Newton can still improve, and I support better recycling, banning some forms of unnecessary plastic, and zoning for more density near T stops, so fewer households are dependent on private vehicles.

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

Newton needs housing at all price points—even housing for the wealthy, who otherwise will bid up the price of more modest homes. I voted to increase our inclusionary zoning percentage for all multifamily developments of 7 units or more to between 17.5-20% (higher numbers for larger projects). I supported the West Newton Armory and Haywood House 100% affordable projects. I supported the creation of a housing fund to help make more affordable housing possible. But the region still has a deficit of roughly 200,000 units, and if they aren't built within 128, we will have the traffic from people who live outside of 128—or our employers will move where working people can afford to live.

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

As chair of the Public Safety committee, I support retaining Newton's best-

in-class status for fire and police departments. But I recognize the importance of continual improvement, training, and community connections to do so. I support non-violent, productive responses to addiction and mental health crises, and have been working closely with the Chief on ensuring NPD is a [21st century](#) department.

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

I lobby for progressive legislation at both levels, and can bring local knowledge to these debates—I recently wrote the General Court supporting greater transparency in that body (and referencing Council's working within the Open Meeting Law).

But municipalities can be the testing ground for policies at the state and national level. Our plastic bag ban, multiplied across enough communities, has been one impetus for state legislation limiting the free distribution of plastic shopping bags. Our adoption of the Green Communities Act shows that higher levels of sustainability are achievable—and that we can do even better.

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.

When I first decided to run, in 2017, I was motivated to do what I could to preserve democratic governance in a perilous time. The longer I serve, the more I see opportunities for city-level actions that address both your quality of life and the bigger issues facing the nation and the world.

With local initiatives, I believe we can make room for more neighbors AND reduce traffic congestion.

- That our kids can safely get themselves to school AND our seniors can access
- shopping and services.
- That we can adapt to new weather conditions AND reduce energy consumption;
- That we can increase our quality of life AND reduce waste.
- That we can have more convenience AND more trees.

I believe that together, we can give a leg up to those who need it, create greener, quieter, safer neighborhoods and bustling village centers, fix our streets, pipes and buildings, and embrace new neighbors.

Please visit my website at www.andrae4newton.org.

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. But I don't know why the MBTA can't expand service and how MWRTA might be able to if MBTA can't.

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](#)