



Progressive Newton 2023 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

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Office Sought: Ward 6 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.

- 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”?**

Immediately following the override, I was deeply involved in a series of efforts to find more funding for the Newton Public Schools. This included bold advocacy and a complicated set of negotiations with respect to Newton’s pension appropriation schedule – an effort that I partnered on with School Committee Member Brezski, Council President Albright, Vice President Lipof, and Councilor Markiewicz. Our efforts resulted in ensuring that we can still meet our obligations to our retirees in a responsible and timely way, while freeing up significant funding that Mayor Fuller can use to fund the City’s highest priorities. In this first year, the Mayor has chosen to allocate the funds available to move forward on the much-needed Horace Mann renovation.

During the budget process I strongly advocated for allocating more free cash to student needs, including exploring the idea of contributing our unusually large amount of free cash available this year to a trust fund that could possibly have been established for the ongoing benefit of the Newton Public Schools. While the Mayor and her team did not embrace this idea, I'm proud to have worked hard to find creative solutions to equip NPS with the resources they need.

Academic excellence means supporting every student in growing and developing into the very best version of themselves they can be. It is our job to provide students with the breadth and depth of opportunity they each need to ignite their passions, open their minds, think critically, act kindly, and go out into the world ready to make a difference, as well as the social and emotional support to do so healthfully. It means meeting each and every student where they are, including providing rigorous academic challenge to those students who are ready for it and desire it. It also includes fostering an environment where all feel welcome, accepted, respected, heard, and embraced, and establishing values of respect for all people that our students will carry throughout their lives.

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 fully support the School Committee's actions on this.

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

Diversity, equity and inclusion means acknowledging that systemic racism is real and present throughout our country, including here in Newton. It means learning from and speaking honestly about our past failures to ensure that we make the necessary changes in our present and future to welcome and lift up all people. It means supporting our LGBTQIA+ students and staff and ensuring they feel welcome and safe at school and in our community. It means reexamining our hiring practices to ensure we're hiring a diverse workforce at every level of municipal government, including in the schools. It means continuing to educate ourselves as to our biases and blind spots and to confront them head on. We are a better, stronger city when we build a future that welcomes, works for, and supports all.

This work happens in our schools starting with how we hire, how we train, and how we educate. As a City Councilor, I have advocated for our School Committee and school administration to have the resources to do this vital work, and I will continue to do so.

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

We face deep-seated racism in the United States. I am deeply saddened that this remains the case. Black Lives Matter means to me that we will not ever tolerate hatred and bigotry in our community or our country. It means that no person should fear for his or her safety when pulled over for a routine traffic stop. It means that no person should be made to feel that they are any less than anyone else because of the color of their skin. And it means that we must be honest about our own biases and privileges that still pervade society, and work towards leveling the playing field and offering equal opportunities for success and prosperity for all.

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

Expanding access to transportation is vital for many reasons, including closing the socioeconomic gap, reducing our carbon footprint, and improving the quality of life for all Newtonians – especially our senior community. I have worked with our Mayor, my colleagues, and our state leaders to advocate for investment in transportation, including our MBTA and commuter rail stations, at every possible turn.

I have also advocated and will continue to advocate for expanded transportation by looking for creative solutions, such as bike sharing, utilizing ride-sharing technology, and evaluating shuttle service where possible and economically responsible for the City. I have advocated and will continue to advocate for investment in repairing our roads and sidewalks and embracing the Complete Street design approach with the goal of improving traffic flow, pedestrian safety, and bike safety. I’ve also consistently supported transit-oriented development projects in our village centers where public transportation is available and walkability is significantly improved.

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

We’re hurtling toward a future where the realities of climate change will overshadow everything else. Our planet is in peril and thus, every decision we make must be looked at through this lens. We’ve done a lot of good work over

my 6 years on the Council and I will continue to support these efforts going forward. I'm particularly interested in diverting reusable material from our waste stream and reducing our trash; implementing recycling and composting in our schools; making our villages more walkable; utilizing zoning and the special permit process to push developers to build increasingly energy efficient buildings; repairing and improving our roads to increase safety and access for pedestrians and bikers; investing in the repair of our water, sewer and stormwater systems to address leaks and wasted resources that result from those leaks; investing heavily in open space; and supporting EV charging infrastructure.

I'm particularly proud of the work I've done together with the administration and School Committee members on our school buildings. I served on the Working Group for our new NECP building, which is the first net zero school in Newton having converted the building to completely electric heating and cooling, and enrolling in Newton Power Choice. Minimizing environmental impact is also at the forefront of the work we've done on the Lincoln Eliot Working Group. With each project, we improve, learn more, and get closer to our climate goals.

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

Expanding opportunities for affordable housing in Newton is vital to ensure that Newton remains a diverse, inclusive, and accessible community for people of all ages, backgrounds, and economic means, including our seniors, working families, and young professionals. Throughout my tenure on the Council, I have consistently supported transit-oriented, mixed-use projects that add to our housing stock, enhance our village centers and grow Newton's tax base. Right now the Council is at a critical juncture with respect to our compliance with the MBTA Communities Act. Broadly, I support the direction we're headed and the overall plan our Planning Department has put before us, though there are some meaningful pieces and potential amendments that are still in development and deserve my careful consideration and evaluation. I'm confident the Council will pass a meaningful package that will be a huge improvement from where we are today and has the potential to be transformative for affordable housing opportunities in our village centers.

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

Public safety includes ensuring our community is safe, and that all people feel safe and welcome in Newton as well. I have tremendous respect for our police department and its leadership under Chief Carmichael, and I am grateful to our police officers who put themselves in the potential of harm's way each day. I also recognize, as I believe the Chief does, that we have significant improvements to make. This includes reimagining how we respond to mental health needs in Newton, which is a significant portion of what our police force is asked to manage on a regular basis. A horrible recent tragedy in Newton also highlights the need we have to support those suffering from domestic abuse and violence. And we have much work to do with respect to racial bias and discrimination, a topic of difficult and honest discussion in the Public Safety & Transportation Committee.

I will continue to ask the tough questions, bring up the uncomfortable topics, and advocate for the resources needed to make the improvements we must make in public safety, both inside and outside the police department.

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

Although of course the primary responsibility of local elected leaders is to focus on municipal issues, we must recognize that we operate as one municipality within a state and a nation. As such, we are all interconnected, and what happens on the state and national level affects us all – including, at times, the budget and resources Newton has available to provide city services.

Our local elected officials have a platform available to them to advocate for progressive policies that affect all of us. That doesn't mean we must or even should get involved in every state and national issue. But it does mean that our friends and neighbors often look to us for guidance on how to approach the issues of our time. I'm proud that Newton is often regarded as a thought leader, and that we have a reputation for our cutting-edge willingness to experiment and lead on common-sense policies that eventually influence our state and nation to move forward. Marriage equality, transgender rights, and efforts to combat climate change are prime examples. Like local leaders who have come before me and paved the way on many of these issues, I will not hesitate to speak up and lead where appropriate. We can influence the discourse on the state level, and even the national level.

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.

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

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

[No answer]

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?

[No answer]

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

[No answer]

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

[No answer]

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

[No answer]

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

[No answer]

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

[No answer]

[*Read about the aforementioned bills here*](#)