



## Progressive Newton 2023 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

**Name:** Martha Bixby

**Office Sought:** Ward 6 Councilor

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

Yes. I did.

- 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”?**

Following the override votes, I led efforts to ensure that class sizes will be kept at reasonable levels into the future. I testified in front of the school committee, organized a demonstration, and led efforts to submit joint letters from affected school communities. I have also supported the push for fully staffing kindergarten aides next year.

Although my term as PTO president is over, I will continue to be actively involved in the PTO, supporting our school community and advocating for our students.

While the City Council’s role in the schools is limited, we’ve seen over the past few years how Councilors can advocate for our students and our educators.

For instance, speaking up in the budget process, and using their role as city leaders, are ways that Councilors can ensure the best for our schools. I'm also proud to work on my campaign with amazing student leaders from our Newton Public Schools, and plan to continue this work to hear from and raise up issues of importance to our students.

To me, academic excellence means educational opportunities that challenge each child, and ensure equity of opportunity and support for success.

**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 attended the multiple hour hearing on this issue to hear from the community and support many friends who were testifying against the establishment of the proposed committee. I was pleased to see so much of our community come together in support of NPS' work toward inclusive excellence. I do believe that we can support diversity and inclusion and also support constantly striving towards educational excellence, in all of its forms, including rigorous academics for all students, strong sports programs, theater, arts, culinary, other vocational programs, and so much more.

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

From the role of the City Council, I see opportunities to support diversity, equity, and inclusion through recent examples of councilors testifying at the hearing on the academic excellence committee, ensuring funding for programs, such as our EDCO partnership for students who are deaf and hard of hearing, supporting our school social workers especially those focused on our newly arrived and ELL, families, and advocating for the METCO program in the state budget.

Through my work as PTO co-president, and as a leader of Newton Neighbors, I have worked closely with so many members of our community with a diverse set of backgrounds. I have seen and heard about lots of struggles, but also so much that's going right. As city counselor I would hope to continue those relationships and conversations and bring those perspectives to my work every day.

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

To me, Black Lives Matter is a phrase of action. It means recognizing the reasons that our Black neighbors might not feel safe for the same reasons that a white resident of Newton might. It means recognizing the current and historic barriers to Black residents owning a home in Newton, or feeling an equal part of the community. Then, taking steps to address these issues so everyone feels welcome in Newton.

Black Lives Matter also means recognizing that we are part of the greater Boston area, and a part of Massachusetts as a whole, and standing in solidarity with communities that are our neighbors. Newton Neighbors, the organization I helped found, has worked tirelessly in Newton, and with neighboring communities, such as Waltham, Brockton, Roxbury, East Boston, and more to build connection and solidarity and help get resources where they're needed most. I've also been honored to learn from and help Black community leaders get elected to represent their community in Roxbury and Dorchester. These experiences constantly remind me how truly close our communities are, and can, and should be. I hope to bring those perspectives and experiences and connections to my role as city councilor if elected.

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

First, there's so much more we can do to support free and nearly free methods of transportation by significantly increasing pedestrian and bike safety.

City Councilors can and have advocated for increases in MBTA service, safety, and reliability on our bus lines, commuter rail, and the green line. I would join those efforts wholeheartedly.

Recently, NewMo has been a lifeline due to an arm injury that has prevented me from driving right now. I appreciated NewMo before, as an occasional rider, and having seen how it enabled a family I know who had moved here from Central America seeking asylum to be able to get to work, and establish their lives here in Newton. Riding it frequently now though, I've really seen how NewMo makes it possible for people to get to work, for elderly residents to check on friends and stay social, for younger students to get around town safely, and for Newton to stay connected. I'll be very interested to see how we can continue this or similar program into the future.

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

Reducing dependence on oil and natural gas - showcasing and encouraging alternatives: One of the best ways to encourage movement away from fossil fuel is neighbors talking to neighbors. Recently a street near me hosted a sustainable street tour, where people showed off their heat pumps, solar panels, and reductions in their utility bills. Green Newton's giveaways and rentals of induction stove tops have allowed people to experience the joys of cooking fossil fuel free. As councilor, I would aim to support and even amplify renewable living so that people can see first hand how possible it is to make the switch and live fossil fuel free.

Holding the companies accountable: Eliminating natural gas leaks and making utilities pave the roads to a complete streets standard after repairing leaks or installing new hook ups so that it is safe for bikes, pedestrians and vehicles. Having just broken my arm biking on a poorly repaved natural gas trench, I am personally committed to finding ways to ensure these companies keep our community safe.

Working towards banning new fossil fuel hookups: I would support and advocate for Newton banning natural gas connections in new projects.

Open space: The job of a Ward Councilor is extremely local. One of the best ways we can make a difference locally is by protecting our open spaces so they are positive contributors to the environment. I would also continue my work advocating for public transit and bike and pedestrian safety.

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

Increasing affordable housing is a top priority. Through zoning redesign, we can provide structures to put in place more affordable housing opportunities and pathways for nonprofit developers to create affordable housing. By reducing parking we can also keep the cost of creating new affordable housing lower and reduce our environmental impact.

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

Public safety means every member of our public feels and is safe. We can further this by supporting the appropriate response to emergency situations - whether that's a social worker, members of our police force, firefighters, EMTs - and that these first responders are appropriately trained and have the proper

resources to succeed in their task of keeping our community safe and making sure every member of our community truly feels safe.

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

When appropriate and relevant, local elected officials can use their position as representatives at the most local level to bring the perspectives of that local community into conversations at the state level. Sometimes that means writing letters in an official capacity, sometimes that might mean taking advantage of opportunities to learn and gather information from state and national leaders, or attending public events and rallies. That also means connecting with other leaders and our neighboring communities to share information and stand together.

**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.**

I'm running for Newton City Council to bring an inclusive, community-focused voice to our local government. There's more about me and my campaign at [marthabixby.org](http://marthabixby.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.

**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](#)