

# 2023 Salem City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Progressive Salem

Name: [Megan Stott](#)

Office Sought: [Ward 6 City Councillor](#)

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## **PUBLIC SECTION**

*The public part of the questionnaire contains a mix of yes/no and open-ended questions. Please keep all answers to open-ended questions to no more than 150 words. A non-response to a yes/no question will be treated as a no.*

### **(A) Your Candidacy**

1. What would be your top three priorities if elected to serve?
  - [Ward & constituent services](#)
  - [Transparency and access in municipal government](#)
  - [Housing, transportation & the environment \(all three go hand in hand\)](#)

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

[I am a registered voter in the City of Salem, residing in Ward 6.](#)

[I have demonstrated that I am an organizer, who is not afraid to speak up for others. My ability to lead conversations, while also listening and providing space for others, is a skill that I think is critical to uphold.](#)

[My diverse professional background has prepared me for many situations. My ability to communicate effectively with everyone is paramount to my successes. As a current Councillor, I have been working hard to bring neighbors together and unite Ward 6. I am running for re-election in 2023 in the hopes to continue this momentum of collaboration.](#)

3. What do you see as the role of the City Council in Salem?

City Councillors wear many hats, especially ward councillors. We are policy leaders and supports, service connectors and helpers and budgetary and fiduciary oversight.

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

I don't know about pioneered, but I have been looking into other cities' street sweeping policies - I like San Francisco for example where street sweeping is completed more regularly and on a consistent basis, with permanent signage to that effect and less confusion with residents of when cars need to be removed.

5. What does community service mean to you?

Growing up, my family was new to Massachusetts. I was the youngest in the family led by our single mother, who was living far away from any relatives. She raised her four children to be strong and resourceful, but sometimes help was needed and it was our community who often saved the day.

My mother never spoke much of the help we needed, but she often spoke of the help we could GIVE. That meant many things over my childhood, like passing on our toys, volunteering our time around town (my choice was always to help at the library), or helping neighbors with yard work.

After landing in Salem, I fell in love with the community here and felt the familiar desire to give back. This could mean different things to different people. Picking up litter on your walk to the train, organizing neighborhood events, volunteering for the Salem Farmers Market, serving on a board or your child's PTO. Any point of connection with the community where you are providing your time or skills. To me, that is what makes a community - not what you get out of it, but how you can support each other.

## **(B) Civil Rights & Community Engagement**

1. Name an accomplishment you're particularly proud of that helped to achieve and advance racial justice or equity.

I am proud of the work put forth recently to remove Gendered language from our ordinances as well as the 2022 Resolution on Protection of Reproductive Healthcare Rights submitted at council.

2. What steps would you take, if elected, to engage all the diverse communities of Salem in policymaking, and what past actions of yours should give voters confidence that you will follow through?

Having the honor of serving on Salem's Race Equity Task Force in 2020 was both eye opening and inspiring. Salem should be proud of the work we have done to be a diverse, equitable and inclusive city, but also know there is more work to be done.

I was, and continue to be, in full support of the members and efforts of our new Race Equity Commission, which was a resulting item from the 2020 Race Equity Task force, along with the hire of our Race Equity Director, Regina Zaragoza Frey, who leads the city in many initiatives.

In 2019 the city completed an ADA transition to assist in prioritizing accessibility improvements – I am in full support of continuing the work outlined in this plan, and elsewhere reported.

3. The future of democracy depends on robust youth engagement. Describe how you engage youth formally in your work as city councilor, or would plan to do so if elected.

Well, first off my eleven year old daughter gets dragged to every council and city meeting, haha. Forced youth engagement! I kid I kid. Besides that, I think including the youth voice is very important. I make it a point to try to be on all platforms where these conversations are taking place, as well as being present at local events. I also love speaking with youth groups and opening up council chambers and the work that is being done when asked. From speaking with the High Schoolers to assist with a class project, to the Girl Scout troops at elementary schools, being present and engaged is critically important to me, and what I think is the best perk of the job.

4. What do you think it means to be an ally of the LGBTQ+ community?

I think being an Ally is someone who provides space to those in the LGBTQ+ community, and my role as an Ally is to listen, amplify and advocate. The fear within our LGBTQ+ community currently due to the national, and sometimes local, hostility is scary and I will always work hard to be an ally and step up where appropriate.

5. If a resolution had come before the council to support access to driver's licenses and extending in-state tuition rates & aid to undocumented residents how would you have voted and why?

They are now available, but yes, I support drivers licenses and in-state tuition rates to undocumented residents of Massachusetts.

### **(C) Budget & Revenue**

1. What opportunities do you see for the city to raise revenue?

I think there is opportunity with the Halloween season for the city to more proactively collect revenues.

### **(D) Education**

I am going to leave these questions up to the school committee candidates, as City Councilors have no say in School Policy making. I will say I am a full supporter of the Salem Public Schools. As a parent to a 6th grader at Collins Middle School, I believe our schools have top priority in the city and are under excellent leadership with Superintendent Zrike.

1. What are your top priorities for reducing persistent racial and economic achievement gaps in the Salem Public Schools?
2. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools in Salem? **YES**
3. What steps would you take to raise the school rating for the Salem Public School System as a whole?

### **(E) Public Safety**

1. Would you advocate for the reallocation of money from the Salem Police Department budget to be reinvested in communities? **YES**
  - a. **If Yes, how would you "refund" the police and reallocate resources?**
2. Do you support the legalization of overdose prevention centers? **YES**
3. What steps would you take to address homelessness in Salem?
4. What steps can the city take to address pedestrian safety?

Traffic calming & Enforcement (force the cars to slow down) & Increased visibility (improve sight lines, making sure areas are well lite) and all important aspects to improving pedestrian safety

5. (Did you) Would you have voted in favor of the sanctuary for peace ordinance?  
YES

## **(F) Environment & Transportation**

1. What steps would you take to reduce dependence on cars and better facilitate the ability of Salemites to get around by walking, biking, or using public transit?

Continue the support and advocacy of programs such as Bike Bikes, The salem skipper and bike lane infrastructure throughout the city.

2. What are your plans long term to address the city's aging water pipe infrastructure?

I don't have any specific plans, but the City Engineering Department has budgeted plans to replace specific areas in the city, as discussed during budget hearings.

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

I support a Green Building Ordinance, the upcoming client resiliency overlay ordinance, and alternative transportation options (Bike lane infrastructure creation, salem skipper, etc)

4. Do you oppose the creation of new fossil fuel infrastructure in Salem? **YES**
5. Do you support the fare-free trolley program? **YES/ NO WHAT IS THIS? Is there a program being proposed? Never heard of this...**
6. Do you support the expansion of the City's curbside composting pickup program? **YES - would need more details, but yes**
7. Do you support the offshore wind project? **YES**
8. Do you support continuing the existing Blue Bikes program? **Expand**
9. Do you support the City's partnership with Boston Harbor Cruises offering ferry service to and from Boston? **YES - but should be partnership with MBTA**

10. Do you support Salem adopting Vision Zero, which guides our transportation policy towards eliminating all traffic fatalities and making our roads safer for all users? **YES**

## **(G) Housing**

1. Do you agree or disagree that Salem should do more to encourage housing production of all types, including both market rate and income-restricted? If so, how can the City encourage housing production?  
**Agree**
2. What opportunities do you see for leveraging city-owned land for expanding market rate and Affordable housing?  
**If we have buildable city owned land, housing should be considered. This is part of our land disposition city ordinance as well.**
3. Do you support rent stabilization? **YES/ NO** if yes how would you help stabilize it? - **Not quite sure I understand the details of this question**
4. How do you plan to address the intersection of homelessness and soaring housing prices?  
**Continue to advocate for affordable housing options**
5. Do 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 - similar to the one that is being piloted by the city currently. Should be adjusted some to be more appealing**
6. Do you support implementing an inclusionary development policy (IDP) in Salem at 10% as has been discussed to date? **Yes at 10% / Higher % / Lower % / Not at all - Still under review, I will support what is allowable under the MBTA communities rule, which Salem is currently reviewing.**
7. Do you Support the ending of mandatory minimum parking requirements for new construction? **YES - but this cannot be completed in a silo, and other items (such as our resident parking program and garage passes, also needs to be reviewed in order to remove parking requirements.**
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**

9. Across the city, there are projects for large-scale supportive housing that are being fought by local communities, such as Lee Fort Terrace, Lifebridge, etc. Do you support pushing forward with these specific projects and others like them? **YES**

## **(H) Economic Opportunity**

1. What steps would you propose to reduce Salem's income and wealth inequality, especially the racial wealth gap?
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**
3. What steps can the Council take to achieve greater diversity in City contracting?
4. The cannabis industry is expected to grow in Salem 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?

## **(I) Democracy**

1. How can Salem increase turnout in municipal elections?  
Communication on upcoming elections, vote by mail and early voting are all important tools to turnout. I understand those last two are of increased budgetary costs.
2. How can the council increase transparency?  
This year, I have worked to create a process for the Council and its committee to better share their documents that are being reviewed at meetings. I also share details of city meetings, and upcoming schedules in addition to what is put out by the city via social media and my email newsletter. I am supporting the city clerk and her offices' efforts to transition to new agenda software, which will provide increased transparency of meeting recordings and ease of use for all interested parties.
3. What are you personally doing to increase turnout in this upcoming election?  
Reminding everyone that every vote counts - plus more.

4. Do you support allowing non-citizens with legal status the right to vote in municipal elections? **YES - I would like to see this as a statewide effort**
5. Do you support allowing 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in municipal elections? **YES - I would like to see this as a statewide effort**
6. Would you support Charter Change to allow for Ranked Choice Voting in Salem? **YES - I would like to see this as a statewide effort**
7. Do you support making hybrid access to public meetings permanent? **YES**

**(J) Additional Comments**

*(Use this space to make any final comments you deem important for progressive voters assessing your candidacy.)*