

## Questions for Progressive Newton

### Multi-Family Housing:

The newly enacted Section 3A of Massachusetts General Law c. 40A states “An MBTA community shall have a zoning ordinance or by-law that provides for at least 1 district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right; provided, however, that such multi-family housing shall be without age restrictions and shall be suitable for families with children. For the purposes of this section, a district of reasonable size shall: (i) have a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre, subject to any further limitations imposed by section 40 of chapter 131 and title 5 of the state environmental code established pursuant to section 13 of chapter 21A; and (ii) be located not more than 0.5 miles from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station, if applicable.”

Do you think that the City of Newton should meet these minimum requirements in the establishment of more multi-family housing near transit stops or exceed them?

**Newton submitted its MBTA-compliant zoning by the December 31, 2023 deadline. Newton passed even more density and did not include those rezoned properties with their submission in part because they were told by their consultants that the final version of the zoning which was passed was over what was required to comply.**

### Education:

The Newton Teacher’s Association went on strike for eleven days beginning on January 19th and ending February 2nd, 2024. They demanded higher wages, longer parental leave, and social workers in every school among other things. In doing so, they were fined over \$600,000 since in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts it is illegal for public employees to go on strike.

If you were an elected official during the strike, how did you respond to it and why? (if applicable)

For candidates who were not in an elected position during the strike: how would you respond to the strike, if it had happened while you were an elected official?

**There is no official role that a State Representative has in the contract negotiation process. I ran for Mayor in 2017 and again in 2021. I was very public about the trajectory of the city’s finances - particularly because of the aggressive funding schedule to pay down our pension and OPEB liabilities. I publicly raised these concerns and suggested that the city embrace regular operating and debt exclusion overrides if the city wanted to continue to provide for our residents and our workers.**

You ask how would I have responded to the strike?

**If I were State Representative, I would have reached out to the Mayor, the Chair of the SC and the head of the teacher’s union and offered my services to reach an agreement to quickly end the strike.**

What do you think could have been done to avert the strike? What policies do you support, on the municipal and state level, to ensure that public educators are supported?

**Transparency about the city's finances, trust by both parties that each party is negotiating in good faith, and ensuring that every measure is being made to avoid an impasse. The State needs to provide more funding to our municipalities to properly fund our schools. Municipalities should be required to accept paid family medical leave.**

Do you think that teachers in the Commonwealth should be allowed to go on strike and that the law penalizing them from doing so should be repealed?

**While I understand the frustration of prolonged negotiations and the toll it takes on employees fighting for fair wages, improved working conditions, and better resources, especially if negotiations are not in good faith, strikes can have a harmful and detrimental impact on our most vulnerable. I would seek alternative ways to assist our public workers facing stalemates. I acknowledge that not being able to strike creates an unfair bargaining position and we should fix this imbalance. However a prolonged strike is extreme especially when children are impacted.**

**I agree that the fines can be excessive and should be reviewed.**

#### Budget of the City of Newton

The mayor of the City of Newton, Ruthanne Fuller, stated that the reason the City was not able to meet the teacher's demands was that the most recent override proposition of \$9,175,000 that was brought to the voters of Newton on March 14, 2023 failed to pass.

Were you a supporter of the override proposal? If so or if not, why?

**I voted for the override despite the City having millions in Free Cash and other available one-time funds. I agree that one-time funds should not be the preferred funding source to use for ongoing expenses.**

How do you think that Newton can meet its budget shortfalls?

- 1. We can increase our revenues through more commercial development.**
- 2. We can make adjustments to our funding schedule to pay down our pension and OPEB liabilities while still meeting the deadline.**
- 3. We can have regular operating and debt exclusion overrides.**

#### Transportation

1. Newton is currently served by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) as well as the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA). Are the current levels of service by these agencies adequate? Why or why not?

**Current levels of service by the MBTA is inadequate. Since service reductions were placed in 2021, Newton residents have limited commuter rail options if they travel to and from Boston during rush hour. The Green line runs more frequently but is much slower and is unreliable and is constantly under construction. The Express Bus Service was a convenient and efficient way to get commuters to and from Boston and that was cut as well. Given this, more people are commuting by car.**

2. Are there any improvements you support for the MBTA and the MWRTA? If so, what would they be?

**I support upgrading all of our stations to make them fully accessible for all. I support modernizing the fleet including electrification and support more investments in upgrades to increase speed. I also support reinstating the express bus service and advocating for express bus lanes on our roadways.**

**An efficient and reliable public transit system is critical especially with the potential reconstruction of our commuter rail stations and the I-90 project. In addition, Newton already has approximately 1300 multi-family units permitted near or within walking distance to our commuter rail stations and has just adopted new zoning to add even greater density to these stations. Unless accessibility, frequency, and reliability improvements are made to transit service, Newton cannot tout development in or near the MBTA stations as transit-oriented development and more people will revert to their cars.**