



★ ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE ★

Deadline: September 25TH

Candidate Event: October 15TH, 5:30PM

Solidarity Lowell 2023 City Council Questionnaire

Name: Susie Chhoun

Office Sought: District 5 Councilor

Website: n/a

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Section 1: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

1. The city has more work to do in the area of fair, unbiased policing.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? How would you address this issue?

I think there is always room for improvement in the relationship between the community and law enforcement. One way to improve that relationship is by having hiring practices that ensure the promotion of officers from a diverse background in the upper leadership of the police force, and by providing trainings or workshops on cultural competency for officers.

2. The city needs to diversify its hiring practices so that City Hall proportionally represents the ethnic makeup of our city's residents.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? What are your proposals to address Lowell city hiring practices?

We have many opportunities to improve the diversity at city hall. Alongside the city manager, I would work with my colleagues to develop and implement a plan to attract, retain and promote diverse talent. One way to attract this talent would be to post job descriptions reflecting a community's first language within their neighborhood, opening up opportunities for people who otherwise might not see them.

3. Would you support requiring developers in the city to sign community benefit agreements? These might include requirements that their workforce reflect Lowell's diversity, that a certain percentage of their workforce be local hires, and/or that pay be a living wage. (YES/NO)

YES.

4. The city needs to ensure that all marginalized communities are equally protected.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? What proposals do you have for ensuring equal protections for all Lowell residents and visitors?

Yes, we need to ensure all marginalized communities are equally protected. One way toward this goal is to hire more diverse people in the positions that are responsible for making public safety decisions.

5. Systemic racism is a public health crisis in Lowell.

1. Strongly Agree

2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

If so, why and how do you propose to respond to the crisis in Lowell-specific ways? If not, why not?

Within our city government and schools, we should continue to hire a diverse workforce. We could help one another be better neighbors by partnering with our community organizations to host professional development and/or community workshops where people could have open and honest guided discussions about the experiences and perspectives of our marginalized communities.

6. What steps would you take, if elected, to engage all of the diverse communities of Lowell in policy-making, and what past actions of yours should give voters confidence that you will follow through?

I am a staunch advocate for inclusion. As a school committee member, I supported motions to help get to the bottom of the hiring issues at the school; and filed and advocated for motions supporting DEI initiatives.

Section II: Housing, Labor, and Development

1. Lowell's code enforcement should do more to protect tenants from evictions and/or penalties for previous evictions.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

If so, why and how do you propose to strengthen tenant rights? If not, why not?

Yes, I support further protections for tenants. The council should research and implement further legal protections for people against rent increases and/or evictions for reporting unsafe conditions in their homes to Code Enforcement to prevent retaliation by reported landlords.

2. How would you expand affordable housing in Lowell and ensure development without displacement of established communities?

The City should be considering all options to increase housing stock, such as: ADUs, tax incentives to re-develop existing or develop new affordable housing, and exploring zoning reform to allow for more residences to be built.

3. How would you address the needs of the unhoused population of Lowell?

We have many great community partners working on this issue the best way they can, but they currently need more money and more people to work the job. Partnering with our state delegation to secure more funding to our strained system will only temporarily fix the problem. Providing further support to our community partners needs to be done in tandem with efforts to increase housing stock to prevent more people from becoming unhoused in the first place.

4. Do you agree with a Housing First approach? (YES/NO)

YES.

5. Do you agree with the city's unhoused encampment sweeps? (YES/NO)

NO.

6. Would you agree with establishing legal camping areas for those unhoused persons for whom no other accommodations are available? (YES/NO)

NO.

7. How would you ensure there are adequate services for all unhoused persons?

To reiterate, by partnering with our state delegation to secure more funding to our support service, and by advocating for more housing.

8. Would you support a city wage theft ordinance that would set up structures to protect workers from wage theft violations such as failure to make wage payments; failure to abide by minimum wage, prevailing wage and overtime laws; and independent contractor misclassification? (YES/NO)

I need more information on how that ordinance would be structured to make a decision.

9. How would you fill the empty downtown storefronts?

I would work closely with the city manager, the district and at large councilors, to craft policy to best address this issue.

Section III: Environment and Transportation

1. Would you support programs to subsidize retrofitting the old housing stock in Lowell to be more energy efficient, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce energy costs for residents? (YES/NO)

YES.

2. Climate change is causing more days of extreme heat, flooding, damaging storms, and drought; just to name a few of the impacts. Lowell could do more to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

What steps would you recommend that the city take to improve its preparedness?

Ensure that any existing renovation of existing public buildings, or newly built public buildings, are designed with sustainability and adaptability considerations, and is appropriate 5 years from now, and 50 years from now.

3. In 2018, the Lowell City Council passed a resolution supporting a goal of 100% renewable energy use in Lowell-- including in buildings and transportation-- by 2035. This year, Massachusetts passed a new climate law that requires significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions across our economy by 2030. What steps would you recommend that Lowell take to accomplish these goals?

Updating our infrastructure to be climate resilient (especially the sewer); require that renovations/new buildings are all ready to be electrified; explore options for electrified municipal vehicle fleet; making the public aware of state and federal subsidies for electrification through ad campaigns/social media.

4. The hours and reach of the LRTA need to be extended.

1. Strongly Agree

2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? If so, what would you recommend in order to reach this goal?

People rely on the LRTA to get to work, to school and other essential appointments. Having a regular, reliable mode of transportation not only improves people's lives, but stimulates the economy by making it easier for people to shop in places along bus routes. Reaching this goal would require further investment in workforce and vehicles, and partnering with the state for funds.

5. Lowell should prioritize policies that make it easier to get around the city without depending on cars.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Why or why not? What policy priorities do you support to achieve this goal?

Yes, cars are huge contributors to carbon emissions, and the infrastructure built to accommodate them is often hostile to pedestrians. Supporting the LRTA as described above would go a long way in demonstrating that people can and will leave their cars at home if a convenient mode of transportation exists.

Section IV: City Management/Council Relations

1. Do you agree that too much of our City Council meetings are spent on discussing items that could have been delegated to the City Manager or the appropriate department ahead of the meeting?

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

2. Do you support the five minute speaking time limit being extended to also cover City Council and School Committee members?

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

3. Do you agree that there should be a limit on the number of amendments a Councilor can propose on a given motion or ordinance?

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

Please share any additional thoughts on how our city meetings are run.

I don't think imposing limits on speaking time or amendments will lead to improved city council efficiency or better policy. Sometimes it takes more than 5 minutes to explain the nuances of an issue, and limiting the amendments of individual councilors could have unintended consequences.

Section V: Final Thoughts

1. Communication between the Lowell city government and the people of Lowell needs to be improved.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

If so, what ideas do you have to improve the communication between the Lowell city government and the people of Lowell? If not, why not?

I think providing city council business and other public information in multiple languages would help inform and empower the residents, just as hiring a diverse workforce will help improve how our community is served.

2. What will you do to maintain contact with your constituents while you are in office?

I will respond to my constituents' concerns whether through phone, email or social media. I will also be sure to let my constituents know ahead of time what community events I'll attend so they can feel free to talk to me in person. I am bilingual, so I will also be able to provide a direct line of communication to our Cambodian community members.

3. Do you commit to ensuring that important city communications are accessible in the main languages (English, Spanish, Khmer) of the city's residents, including City Council meetings and minutes, policy and emergency announcements?

Yes.

4. What are your top three priorities if elected?

Safe school buildings; public information translated and accessible to our residents; improve our residents' quality of life by ensuring our parks, sidewalks and roads are maintained and well-lit.