



## Progressive Newton 2023 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

**Name:** Vicki Danberg

**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. I strongly supported the three override items on the ballot this past spring and worked to help pass all three.

- 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”?**

It is unfortunate that the operating portion of the override failed as it affected many school related items that it would have funded. All budgets are value judgements. The school budget is roughly two thirds of the City budget.

While many interests compete for funding, our schools have to be a high priority. We must respect our teachers and staff and support them morally and financially. We must support all levels of academic achievement from the AP level to students who are struggling. Kindergarten provides the foundation for later learning. Aides at this level are critical. We must assure an atmosphere in which

all students feel safe, valued and respected.

“Academic excellence” to me means a learning environment in which all students feel supported and valued, the physical plant is comfortable and conducive to learning, teachers and staff feel valued and learning may take place without fear of bullying, disrespect or lack of academic or mental health support.

It also requires adequate funding for supportive technology needed for students’ success and support for teachers and other support staff to do their jobs without moral or financial stress.

**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 completely support the School Committee’s 9-0 vote against the creation of this committee. The proposers of this committee did not espouse educational principles that I agree with. Some of these groups were present and attempting to infiltrate school committees with their views when I was a high school teacher some years ago.

The Newton School Committee has done a very good job in shepherding the schools through the difficult COVID years and continues to provide thoughtful guidance on the direction of our schools in the important job of the education of our younger generations.

**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 (DEI) means that everyone regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or sexual orientation has equal opportunity to succeed and feel safe, respected and valued as a person. We as a City can help ensure that this environment prevails in our schools and City at Large.

We must create a welcoming and inclusive environment and a culture of belonging that celebrates diversity and provides ways for all to learn about different cultures and perspectives. We must make sure that all students have equal access to academic and extracurricular resources and to family, interstudent and mental health support.

We must address bias caused by unconscious attitudes and beliefs that can lead to discrimination and unequal treatment and hold our schools accountable for ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for all. We must create instructional materials that reflect the diversity of the student body. These are just some of the ways that we can ensure a learning environment that is safe and respectful of all.

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

“Black Lives Matter” is a non-violent movement in protest against incidents of police brutality and other racially motivated violence against black people. It also represents a call to action to the American people to recognize the systemic racism embedded in our American culture and to help dismantle it.

To me “Black Lives Matter” means that all black people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. It means that we must all strive to create a more just and equitable society and to challenge and destroy the systems created to marginalize and oppress black people.

The movement has raised awareness of racial injustice in ways never before seen in the country and has led to some positive changes including new laws governing police brutality and racial profiling. While we are a long way from where we need to be, the “Black Lives Matter” movement has helped raise awareness of the history of racism in the US and provided a reminder that we need to continue to fight racism and injustice to make America a welcoming place for all.

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

I will continue to work with our State and Congressional delegation on funding to build accessible Commuter Rail stations in Newton. As a Councilor, I pledge to lobby the Administration to increase funding for subsidized transportation options for senior and disabled residents and require developers of larger projects under special permit to provide free shuttles to MBTA and commuter rail stops, villages and shopping areas.

Let’s not forget that providing better access to affordable transportation also includes encouraging greater use of bike transport enjoyed by increasing numbers of people as we add bike lanes and make bike commuting safer and more convenient for all. I worked with the Transportation engineers to install Newton’s first bike lane (on Beacon Street in Newton Centre). We need to

continue and expand our commitment to installing bike lanes in Newton.

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

The City of Newton has a robust Climate Action Plan that gives clear steps toward achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. I strongly support it and will work in every way I can to implement its plan.

I will work to install more City EV chargers and require new developments to install chargers for residents and business users, continue to vote in favor of City solar installations, lobby for City and private developments to adhere to Passive House construction standards and work in every way I can to encourage increased adoption of green standards in construction and rehab of City buildings and homes.

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

Access to stable and affordable living space is the greatest predictor to success in life. There is a critical shortage of affordable housing all over the US. The problem has risen to crisis level in the Boston area. As elected officials, we have a responsibility to address this problem and work to alleviate it.

As Vice Chair of Zoning and Planning, I work closely with our ZAP Chair and the Planning Department on all items that come before the committee. Our current major project is the overhaul of the Newton Zoning Code. Housing in villages is our current topic. With the lack of housing, especially affordable, at crisis level, I am working hard to allow housing over retail in our villages, and smaller residential infill projects by right near our public transit nodes.

We continue to make alterations to the plan in response to the many comments received to make sure it fits Newton's needs and works for all while complying with the MBTA requirements for the 177 communities serviced by the MBTA and commuter rail.

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

Public safety is the protection from and prevention of events that might endanger the safety and security of the public from personal injury, property

damage or other harmful events. It includes crime prevention and investigation, emergency response and disaster preparedness.

The great majority of Newton's 911 calls involve medical emergencies. Our emergency response history is good but can always be improved. We should invest in advanced technology that can help our responders act quickly and efficiently and make sure we fund training to ensure we have a plan in place to respond to any disaster.

Newton has recently suffered several tragic murders. Whether they were preventable is not known but there are steps we can and should take to best ensure the safety of all of our residents.

We need to make sure we have a full complement of police and fire personnel to ensure we have the resources to respond to any emergency. This includes mental health workers available to respond to mental health crises.

We need to make sure we prepare for the future and the unexpected. We need to make sure our disaster preparedness plan is up to date and that it includes everything that could befall the City.

Public safety is the responsibility of us all. We need a culture of safety in Newton where we do our best to look after ourselves and our neighbors and everyone works to keep our community safe. We accomplish this by encouraging community dialogue about community safety and making sure our public safety officers are both equipped with the resources to make them successful and by making sure they adhere to high standards for their actions.

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

While City Councilors do not vote on policies at the state and national levels, we can influence policy by making our state and congressional representatives aware of what we stand for and consider important to support. Fortunately, we have active and hardworking representatives who listen when we speak and write to them. I feel it is our responsibility to let them know what our priorities are and lobby them to act on our behalf.

**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.**

Climate change looms as an impending crisis for our and future generations. Response to climate change and achieving a clean and safe environment means reducing use of fossil fuels, moving to all electric homes, commercial development and vehicles ASAP, improving recycling and composting, and taking all other measures described in Newton's ambitious Climate Action Plan.

I currently chair Newton's Plastics Reduction Working Group. I have just purchased an electric vehicle, converted my HVAC from gas to electric heat pump, installed solar and added insulation. I recycle and compost all organics to do my part in reducing greenhouse gasses. I now have additional "Street Cred" when encouraging others to do the same!

**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](#)