

## 2021 Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire

### Ricardo Arroyo

Office Sought: Boston City Council District 5

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#### (A) Your Candidacy

1. What would be your top three priorities if elected to serve?

**Addressing inequities in the distribution of Boston's resources, ensuring we continue the work of police reform on the Council, and working to address racial disparity and economic inequity through substantive systemic reforms.**

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

**I believe our government works best when it includes a diversity of voices. I am currently the only man of color and one of only two members of the Latinx community on the council in a city where 1 in 5 Bostonians are Latinx and nearly every inequity affects men of color at a disproportionate rate.**

**I am a product of Boston Public Schools. I am the son of a BPS teacher whose union benefits provided my healthcare. I was taught from a very early age that no one of us is as effective as all of us, and that we all share a communal responsibility to improve the lives of others. I made a decision to attend law school to become a public defender because I felt it was my duty to fight against the scourge of mass incarceration and laws that were created and implemented in ways that disparately affected people of color and women while criminalizing poverty, mental illness, and addiction.**

**I have experience working in partnership with our most disenfranchised populations and advocating successfully in systems heavily stacked against them. As a public defender I fought everyday against systems that attempted to dehumanize my clients. In that work, I was able to help stabilize and connect people to the resources necessary to give them a chance to break cycles of inequity and oppression. I struggled with the limitations that role had in effecting change at the macro level. It was that understanding that compelled me to run for city council in 2019, and I have continued my advocacy for these communities in my time on the council.**

**During my first term in office, I sponsored a ban on facial recognition technology and an ordinance limiting how BPD can use crowd control techniques such as rubber-covered bullets and tear gas. I called for a moratorium on rent and mortgage payments during the pandemic and pushed for recovery plans that are equitable and sustainable while addressing a long legacy of racial and economic disparities. In partnership with the NAACP Boston Branch, the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office, and the city's Election Department, I filed two home rule petitions seeking to expand voting rights in city elections by establishing same-day voter registration and making permanent the vote-by-mail option used in elections last year. These measures would help remove barriers for communities that have been historically disenfranchised, while ensuring voting is safe and accessible to all voters. I also am the lead sponsor of the Surveillance Oversight and Information Sharing ordinance that will be passed this year and creates safeguards for BPS students protecting them from the school-to-prison pipeline and school-to-deportation pipeline.**

**I believe the only way to create a Boston that works for all of us is to work in partnership with our communities on holistic solutions that address the intersections of poverty, housing, education, and environment, and to address the policies that cause harm to so many directly at their root. I believe my professional and personal experiences have uniquely prepared me for this role.**

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

**I am currently working on several environmental policies that other cities have pioneered; one is regarding solar energy on new construction over 10,000 square feet and has been adopted by Watertown and Somerville. The other is a tree protection ordinance also pioneered by Somerville, Wellesley, and Lexington. I am also paying close attention to Barcelona and their aggressive policies on housing that is purchased and left vacant.**

4. Which of the following groups have you chosen to reject / would reject campaign contributions from?
  - a. For-profit developers
  - b. Fossil fuel executives or lobbyists
  - c. Charter school advocates and lobbyists
  - d. Police officers

**We would reject campaign contributions from b, c, d and to my knowledge currently do not accept nor have accepted their contributions.**

### **(B) Racial Equity & Community Engagement**

1. Name three accomplishments you've been able to achieve to advance racial justice or equity.
  - 1) **Ban on facial recognition technology; such technologies have an obvious racial bias and incorrectly identify people of color at alarming rates.**
  - 2) **Led the call for Racism as a Public Health Crisis that, along with community action, led to the creation of an Equity Cabinet and reallocation of police funding. Was also an original co-sponsor of the Office for Police Accountability and Transparency.**
  - 3) **As Public Health Chair I led on ensuring that racial equity was centered in all conversations regarding access to healthcare and resources. I represent Mattapan and Hyde Park, two of the top three neighborhoods impacted by COVID, and was able to secure testing sites and vaccination sites for my constituents, all of which were located and made accessible to predominantly communities of color.**
2. What steps would you take, if elected, to engage all the diverse communities of Boston in policymaking, and what past actions of yours should give voters confidence that you will follow through?

**I will continue to work by centering these communities and by ensuring we continue the partnerships that led to the successful ordinances, home rule petitions, and hearings that we completed in my first term. I have consistently and regularly met with diverse groups and organizations focused on the issues most impactful for our BIPOC residents as well as groups focused on environmental protections and voting rights.**

### **(C) Charter Reform & Balance of Power**

1. What do you see as the role of the City Council in our strong-mayor system?

**I believe that the Boston City Council has two roles. One is to push progressive and holistic policy that affects issues squarely within its control, such as the Facial Recognition Ban or Chemical Weapon and Kinetic Impact Projectile restrictions. I believe councilors' second role is to use the position to lift up the voices of others and to advocate for issues that may not be in their direct control but by their pressure may be addressed by the State House or the Mayor. District City Councilors are the closest to the people, and I believe it is always our responsibility to ensure that city government is responsive to our residents and that city services are being distributed equitably.**

2. The City Council currently has very little ability to influence the budgeting process. Would you support legislation to enable line-item budgetary changes? **YES**

**Additionally, I would support the City Council being able to propose budget items and create its own budget proposal for the City much like the state legislature does. Currently the City Council can only react to the Mayor's budget and only has the ability to reject the budget, not amend it.**

3. Would you support Charter Change to allow for Ranked Choice Voting in Boston? **YES**
4. Would you support changing the city charter to impose term limits for the office in Boston? **NO**  
**I truly believe that voters should and do have final say in who holds office through elections and do not support imposing term limits.**
5. What, if any, other changes to the City Charter would you like to see?

**I believe that the over-centralization of power in the Mayor's office is undemocratic and would support looking at ways the city charter could be amended to address the problem of over-centralization. I would like to see an independent office, separate from the Mayor, that can assess the racial equity impact of all policies or laws coming from the Mayor or the City Council and make those findings public prior to their implementation. This was an aspect of my Racism as a Public Health Crisis advocacy. School committee reform, which I support, also would require charter changes.**

#### **(D) Revenue**

1. Do you support the PILOT Action Group's [recommendations](#) for a standing PILOT commission with community representation? **YES**
2. Given state law, Boston is limited in its taxing power. What opportunities do you see for the city to raise revenue?

**The new PILOT ordinance filed this year is one of the greatest opportunities Boston has right now to increase revenue. By holding our nonprofit institutions accountable, we can add millions of dollars to our budget that could make big differences in housing, education, employment, and more.**

**(E) Education**

1. What are your top priorities for reducing persistent racial and economic achievement gaps in the Boston Public Schools?

**First and foremost we must fully fund ALL of our public schools. The state legislature should be fully funding the Student Opportunity Act as planned. We should amend our weighted student funding formula to include a baseline budget that guarantees that each school offers arts, physical education, social-emotional supports, sciences, and family supports. Asking our schools to do more with less is not a recipe for success. BPS must recruit and support teachers who look like our students and come from the same communities as them.**

**The most important path to educational equity is to improve all of Boston's public schools and not just focus on admission into the three elite exam schools. All students deserve a full, rich, comprehensive education, no matter what BPS school they attend.**

**I am an advocate for extended day and after-school enrichment so that students can have access to the arts, theater, music, and dance. As a former youth sports coach, I know the power of sports to teach life skills and will advocate for physical education and sports programs as well.**

2. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools in Boston? **YES**
3. Do you support a change in BPS governance to allow Boston voters the right to elect school committee members, like every other city in Massachusetts? **YES** If so, what would your ideal structure be? If not, why not?

**The school committee, as it is currently structured, does not provide the independence, transparency, and accountability that our students deserve. My ideal structure would be formed through partnership with parents, teachers, and students. Whether that be in the form of an elected or hybrid school committee is not as important to me as ensuring that whatever form it takes is one that provides independence, transparency, and accountability and whose structure is molded by those key stakeholders. Which again, the current model fails to do.**

4. Do you support removing police from Boston public schools? **YES**

5. Do you support making a permanent change to the admissions process for Boston's exam schools? **YES** And if so, what would your proposed alternative system be?

**I've advocated for the permanent end of exams as part of the selection process during my first term. The process in place for this year, which eliminates test scores and uses a zip code-based distribution for 80% of seats, is a strong first step toward a new and more equitable system of admissions. The Exam School Admissions Task Force is currently at work developing a set of recommendations for the admissions policy for Boston Public Schools exam schools in order to expand the applicant pool and create an admissions process that means the student body better reflects the racial, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity of all students in Boston. I support their work and look forward to their recommendations.**

6. What steps would you take to make universal pre-K a reality in Boston?

**Obviously sufficient funding is key to establishing universal pre-K in Boston. More money from the state would be helpful, but Boston also needs to make universal pre-K and BPS as a whole a greater priority in its budget. Massachusetts recently received federal money targeted to school districts. Boston could use its portion for many improvements, with expanding kindergarten programs and making them truly universal among them.**

#### **(F) Public Safety**

1. Do you support requiring the police department and other city agencies to get City Council approval before acquiring new surveillance technologies or military equipment? **YES**
2. Do you support the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office's do-not-prosecute list and expanded approach to dealing with such low-level offenses? **YES**
3. Do you support ending information sharing between the Boston Police Department and ICE? **YES**
4. Do you support closing the loopholes in Boston's Trust Act, which allow BPD to inquire about immigration status or pass information along to ICE? **YES**
5. Do you support shuttering the Boston Police gang database? **YES**
6. Would you support a hard cap on overtime for individual officers? If so, what percentage of an officer's salary? **YES. Not enough information yet to advocate for a specific percentage.**

7. What changes to the 2017 Boston Police Patrolman's Association (BPPA) contract would you advocate for in the latest round of contract negotiations?

**I would like to see contractual changes that remove the practice of double-dipping by requesting overtime on days officers are already working and eliminating the four-hour minimum for overtime, as well as reducing the number of hours an officer can work in a week. Currently that's 90 hours, which is unhealthy for both officers and the community.**

**I would like to transfer over to civilians administrative roles as well as details. I would like to see changes to the current disciplinary process, which allows officers who have been found to break laws, such as Officer Rose, to escape termination. I will also advocate for body cameras at ALL times and removing the exclusion currently in place for officers on overtime.**

8. What current functions of the Boston Police Department should be transferred to agencies under civilian control, and what governance would you propose for them?

**Details should be transferred to civilians. I would like to transfer responsibilities for 911 calls regarding mental health or substance disorder to appropriate specialists. I would use the successful models Eugene, Oregon pioneered and which are discussed here:**

**<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/10/874339977/cahoots-how-social-workers-and-police-share-responsibilities-in-eugene-oregon>.**

**These are models that have been proven to work and benefit the communities they have been enacted in.**

9. Would you advocate for the reallocation of money from the Boston Police Department budget to reinvestment in communities? **YES** *If so, how much?* **5-10% annually**
10. Would you support a ban on the use of the following by the Boston Police Department? **YES to all, and I was the original sponsor of the ordinance that does just that.**
- a. Tear gas and other chemical weapons?
  - b. Rubber bullets?
  - c. Attack dogs?

11. Do you believe that affiliation or sympathies with white supremacist organizations among officers is a problem with BPD? **YES** *If so, what measures would you take as mayor to combat that issue?*

**I'm not running for mayor, but I would use all power available to me both legislatively and by using my podium to raise the issue to advocate for their immediate termination and a zero-tolerance policy.**

12. Do you support safe consumption sites? **YES**

**(G) Environment & Transportation**

1. Do you believe Boston needs to reduce its dependence on cars, and if so, how would you propose to do so?

**Yes! Fare-free public transit is a major component in reducing Boston's car dependence. In addition to removing the barrier of a fare, we also need a reliable transit system that runs predictably and allows people to reach their jobs and commitments on time. We must organize around improvements to the MBTA as I believe District 5 residents in particular are the victims of severe public transit inequity. I am an advocate for free fares, bus lanes being added on main streets such as Hyde Park Avenue, and reworking the bus system so that residents can get around the district and not just out of the district.**

**All modes of transportation including biking, walking, and public transit—not just personal vehicles—must be considered and taken into account whenever we do transportation planning for our City. This means adding protected bike lanes to make biking safer and easier and traffic calming measures to improve safety for our pedestrians.**

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

**I will use my office to lead on this issue by holding and supporting council hearings, community meetings, and actions and by making sure that the voices of those most impacted by this issue are heard and have a voice in all planning.**

- 1. Accelerating Boston's decarbonization timeline.**
- 2. Protecting and increasing Boston's tree canopy and addressing urban heat islands.**
- 3. Ensuring we enhance and expand multimodal environmentally friendly transportation.**

3. Do you oppose the creation of new fossil fuel infrastructure in Boston? **YES**

4. Do you support fare-free public transit? What steps would you take to achieve this goal?  
**YES**

**I have publicly advocated for this and continue to lobby the State House on this issue and will continue to do so.**

5. Do you support the adoption of a curbside composting pickup program? **YES**



## **(H) Housing**

1. How would you expand affordable housing in Boston and ensure development without displacement?

**I would support steps such as increasing linkage fees, a proposed vacancy tax on commercial and residential properties, and any other proposal shown to effectively create and preserve affordable housing for seniors, families, and young adults. I would also support the creation of a city-funded housing voucher program to provide rental assistance for homeless families and individuals.**

2. What opportunities do you see for leveraging city-owned land for expanding affordable housing?

**I am interested in the model being used in Jamaica Plain for the redevelopment of the Mildred Hailey Apartments--where, because of a lack of available federal dollars, the BHA has partnered with private developers and nonprofits to bankroll these construction and renovation projects, using the value of the land to attract partners. This public/private approach, often called mixed-finance redevelopment, has also been used in Roxbury (Orchard Gardens) and Roslindale (Washington Beech).**

**I'm also interested in identifying public property that can be repurposed for residential use and making it available to developers who commit to creating and maintaining ongoing affordability. This could mean underutilized publicly owned land, redeveloping vacant municipal buildings, or on the same lot as within public buildings that are being used for other purposes. California's Surplus Land Act, for example, requires public entities to give first priority to organizations that will create residential developments where at least 25 percent of the units are affordable to low-income households.**

3. Do you support a real estate transfer tax for commercial and residential sales, with the revenue going to an affordable housing trust? **YES** What exemption threshold, if any, would you advocate for? **Applying the tax to property sales over \$2 million is what Councilor Edwards has been advocating for, and I support that.**
4. Do you support rent control? **YES** If so, how would you structure such a policy? If not, why not ?

**In order to not hurt small landlords, I would exempt people who own six units or fewer. In the past the Boston City Council considered a rent stabilization package that would have exempted anyone who owned six units or fewer and would have allowed for an increase in rent of no more than 10% a year. It was not passed, but as a Boston City Councilor I would have supported that and would support that now.**

5. Do you support the renewal of Boston's condo conversion law, which affords residents of covered properties a notice period, right of first refusal to purchase their unit, relocation assistance, just cause eviction, and relocation benefits if their unit is converted to a condominium? **YES**
6. Would 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**
7. Boston's inclusionary development policy (IDP) requires that 13 percent of the units in a building need to be affordable. Do you support increasing this number? **YES**  
If so, to what?

**I would support 30% or more. The lack of affordable housing in Boston has hit crisis levels and we must approach this issue as a crisis.**

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. Do you support breaking up the BPDA and creating an independent public office of planning? **YES** If so, how will you make it happen?

**There is no direct path through the Boston City Council that I am currently aware of to accomplish this goal. However, our office is currently working toward creating an official master plan process for the city in line with what other cities, such as Seattle, have already.**

10. Do you support increasing the number of units that are ADA compliant in projects that receive City funds? **YES**

## **(I) Economic Opportunity**

1. What steps would you propose to reduce Boston's income and wealth inequality, especially the racial wealth gap?

**One way is to work to ensure that the Invest in Boston legislation is fully implemented which, since its passage in 2013, it has not been. This legislation forces all banks that want to participate in any of the more than 1 billion dollars in banking business generated by the City to disclose their banking practices in Boston—the number of home loans they generate, the number of small business loans they generate, how many Bostonians they hire, and other criteria. Once that information is disclosed it will be used to decide who gets the City's banking business.**

**Additionally, we know that less than 1 percent of more than \$600 million in City contracting services went to businesses owned by women and/or people of color. This is unacceptable, and as a City Councilor I will continue to tackle this issue head on to make sure that all of Boston benefits from this economic infusion that is not currently supporting women and people of color.**

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**
3. Do you support ending subminimum wages for tipped workers in Boston? **YES**
4. How would you *enforce* the hiring goals set forth in the Boston Jobs Residency Policy (which requires that least 50 percent of the total work hours in each trade must go to *Boston* residents, at least 25 percent of the total employee work hours in each trade must go to people of color, and, at least 10 percent of the total employee work hours in each trade must go to women)?

**It begins with transparency and holding regular public hearings where the City gives an accounting on whether they hit the goals, if not why not, and what efforts they made to hit those goals. I will work with advocates and community members to identify ways in which enforcement of these goals can be strengthened.**

5. What targets in city contracting would you commit to for minority-owned businesses as well as Black-owned businesses in particular, and what steps would you take to realize such targets?
  - a. Will you commit to immediately directing all City departments and quasi-city agencies to unbundle large contracts that are set to become available in 2021 and beyond in order to facilitate this? **YES**
  - b. Will you commit to regular reporting to track progress toward and beyond this goal? **YES**
6. The cannabis industry is expected to be a major source of growth in Boston 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 support the new Cannabis Technical Assistance Program, which assists any eligible certified cannabis equity applicants, a designation based on the majority of the applicant's business ownership. The program gives preference to people who live in areas impacted hardest by the war on drugs, Boston residents, people of color, and people with low incomes. The City will also maintain an equal or**

**greater number of equity applicant licensees to licensees that do not qualify as equity applicants. I am also in favor of the Office of Economic Development's hiring of a full-time Cannabis Industry Manager who will guide equity applicants through the certification process and match them with technical assistance providers.**

7. Would you support the creation of a municipal broadband network? **YES**

**(J) Democracy**

1. Do you support allowing non-citizens with legal status the right to vote in municipal elections? **YES**
2. Do you support allowing 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in municipal elections? **YES**
3. In 2022, Boston will engage in redistricting on the municipal level. What would an equitable redistricting process look like to you?

**Redistricting should result in fair districts that equitably represent communities of color, low-income people, and immigrants, and the process should be transparent and involve maximum community engagement. I am the chair of the council's redistricting committee and fully intend to center these values.**

4. Would you support the redrawing of Boston's wards and precincts ("reprecincting"), which has not happened in more than 100 years -- and which happens decennially in other MA cities and towns? **YES, if it can be demonstrated that the process would ensure better district diversity and representation.**

**(K) Additional Comments**

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