



## 2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Anne Thalheimer

Office Sought: Holyoke City Council Ward 3

Website: n/a

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/VoteThalheimer>

Twitter: n/a

BlueSky: n/a

Instagram: n/a

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

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

Preservation of existing green space in Ward 3, working toward accessible municipal internet to homes in Holyoke, and re-establishing regular ward meetings in Ward 3.

#### **2. What qualifies you to hold this office?**

At the local level, most people are qualified to hold office strictly by dint of being an involved community member. Everyone should be able to run for office; local government shouldn't be gatekept through family tradition or privilege. Local government is for everyone.

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

South Hadley has fast and affordable internet available from their municipality, and I really want to see something similar adopted in Holyoke. We have the infrastructure!

### **(B) Open-Ended Policy Questions**

**1. Given state law, municipalities in Massachusetts are limited in their taxing power. What opportunities do you see for the city to raise revenue to support essential city services?**

We are already doing some of this with a meals tax within the city and other initiatives, but I would prefer to see Holyoke invest more in community support and less in overtime costs of the police.

**2. What are your top priorities for ensuring that all students in your city can receive a high-quality public education?**

We're already doing some of this in Holyoke though recently regaining local control of our schools from receivership, but we need to pay our teachers more, support teachers who are aligned with Holyoke and our diverse populations, recruit and retain bilingual teachers, and deepen our commitment to supporting high-quality public education by supporting our educators.

**3. What can your city do to help protect immigrant communities under attack from ICE and ensure genuine community safety?**

This is already a tricky thing in Holyoke as we have two city councilors trying to force the city and local law enforcement to comply with ICE. Obviously, this needs to be shut down, and we need to support the community agencies already directly working with affected populations. As a city, we can vote in a progressive city council and vote out those who would welcome ICE.

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

Preservation of parks and existing green space. Continuing to work with stage agencies to plant trees to provide shade cover. Innovative technology in new buildings and construction to be efficient and green-friendly. Priority focus given to neighborhoods that do not have an existing tree canopy or easy, accessible, no cost access to green space, particularly in our very paved downtown neighborhoods.

**5. What steps would you take to reduce dependence on cars and better facilitate the ability of city residents to safely get around by walking, biking, or public transit?**

We already have free buses in our region, which is excellent, but we need more work to improve bike lanes and pedestrian paths. Our DPW is often overtasked with important repair projects, and we need more traffic calming measures on our side streets as well as main roadways.

**6. What policies will you advocate for to ensure that your city can be a place that is affordable for residents to live at any stage of life?**

We need better, more affordable, accessible housing as well as direct support of our Committee on Disabilities. Rent control would be great; many renters (myself included) are feeling the pinch of a drastic hike in perceived market value and rising rents are pushing people out of Holyoke. But we also need to hold absentee landlords accountable, in addition to exploring the city claiming and renovating abandoned properties.

**7. [If relevant] How would you assess your city's MBTA Communities Act rezoning efforts so far?**

n/a

**8. What strategies would you employ to resist federal overreach from the Trump Administration while protecting critical services and funding for residents?**

We are a municipality in Holyoke with significant local infrastructure that is mercifully protected from the whims of the federal government. However, we also have lost a number of development funding lines for much-needed upgrades that will cause our Mayor and others to look critically at the city's budget and make cuts, as done every year. But some of those cuts can curtail overtime overruns in well-funded departments and reallocate some of that money to local services, including the city's stabilization fund.

**9. How would you model transparency and accountability if elected?**

Right now, we don't even have ward meetings in our ward; our elected official simply sends out an email newsletter from time to time with some updates (and refuses to hold ward meetings), but he also uses this newsletter to broadcast his endorsements in local elections. He has never been held accountable for his behavior in chambers, where he repeatedly loses his temper, insults members of the public and his fellow council members, and storms out of meetings, because there is no provision for censure or recall despite this behavior being in violation of the city's charter. Transparency and

accountability should be paramount in local elections, because the people you represent are also your neighbors and community members. To this end, I will hold regular ward meetings and office hours, and support people actively participating in local government, through community building and conversation.

**(C) Yes/No Policy Questions**

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? **YES**
2. Do you support the creation of an unarmed, community-based emergency response program, separate from the Police Department, to respond to mental and behavioral health crises? **YES**
3. If your community has not already, do you support adopting the new specialized stretch code, which would require new construction and major renovations to be built to a very high-efficiency standard with all-electric (as opposed to fossil fuel) heating and cooling systems? **YES**
4. Do you support fare-free public transit? **YES**
5. Do you support the expansion of the network of permanent, protected bike lanes in your city? **YES**
6. Would you support a home rule petition to establish a small transfer fee on high-end real estate transactions to create dedicated funding for affordable housing production and preservation? **YES**
7. Would you support a home rule petition to enable the city to stabilize rents? **YES**
8. According to the American Library Association, in 2022 there were at least 45 attempts to restrict access to books in MA schools, disproportionately books that speak to the experiences of LGBTQ students and students of color. Would you oppose such book-banning efforts if they occurred in your city? **YES**

**(D) Additional Comments**

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