



2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Ari Iaccarino

Office Sought: City Council at Large, Somerville, MA

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

- a. Housing
- b. Permitting/zoning
- c. Road/bike/pedestrian safety

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

- a. Over 10 years as an educator in public schools and universities; great at communicating complex topics and helping others succeed
- b. Small business person – bootstrapped a business that helped expand accessibility to the outdoors in every state in New England for those without cars. Managed teams in the US, Russia, and the Philippines. Raised money and won grant awards
- c. Corporate worker; I organized communication across every department in a global company of 3,000 people. I know how to work at scale and keep teams aligned

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

- a. Reduced and/or streamlined permitting and zoning for the construction of more housing, specifically multifamily and apartments.

(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?**
 - a. Tax out-of-state landlords and management companies on a portion of every dollar they charge at market rate or above for tenants. I understand this would require a home-rule petition, and I'd still work for it.
 - b. Start having Somerville PD ticket folks for speeding, running red lights and stop signs, etc.. This is a huge issue in Somerville as we are one of the densest cities in America.
 - c. Implement a vacancy tax on all real estate. Our current storefront vacancy ordinance is not enforced, so we should establish a tax. A group of volunteers or paid city officials can enforce this, and if we fill more buildings with entrepreneurs and residents, that's more money we can collect rather than let landlords speculate. Again, might require a home-rule petition.
 - d. Reduce permitting and zoning roadblocks that are preventing communities from filling in empty lots with productive housing/businesses; require one-story landlords in commercial areas to build two or three more stories on top to create more housing and a larger tax base.
 - e. Encourage more mixed zoning so that residential neighborhoods could have non-intrusive cafes or other food establishments close by rather than having to walk half a mile to one; this would also help raise money.

- 2. What are your top priorities for ensuring that all students in your city can receive a high-quality public education?**
 - a. You can't learn well if you don't have a home. We have homeless students, and until there's more housing with protections for lower-income and middle-class kids, the learning won't be as good as it could be. I say this as a certified MA public school teacher. Adults also need good housing whether they're in community college, university, or technical school.

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

- a. Work with community groups that track ICE movement so residents can know in real time where threats are
- b. Make sure the police do not respond to ICE request for help in kidnapping residents or “crowd control”
- c. Coordinate with other cities to lead demonstrations directly at ICE field offices

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?

- a. Build more housing; we can reduce the burden of becoming climate resilient by living closer together and constructing mini parks/tree cover
- b. Bury the power lines; these are a liability in hurricane territory
- c. Update the sewer system; it's 150 years old and is already causing flooding

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?

- a. One of the main priorities of my campaign is to have city-wide shoveling and de-icing; it's sexist and ableist that we don't already do it.
- b. Build more bus benches and bus shelters; the fact we don't have either this or city-wide shoveling/de-icing makes it tough to work with car owners, disabled folks, and others who might not want to ride a bike or walk on dangerous sidewalks.

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?

- a. Build more housing in Somerville *and* develop a coalition of city councilors throughout eastern MA that can apply pressure at the local/state level to encourage more housing. No matter how you slice it or dice it, we need more housing
- b. Provide owner-occupied landlords access to subsidized de-leading programs. Pennsylvania does this, and Somerville can do it too so that way folks can safely have kids in their apartments and homes
- c. Create tenant-protection programs that prevent displacement from Somerville. If an owner sells their house/building, part of the proceeds needs to go to the tenant to find housing in Somerville
- d. Build more senior living centers; we're going to have more older adults, and we need to be prepared to house them
- e. Seek out supportive services funding for people experiencing addiction and homelessness

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

- a. Somerville is doing well, and as a leader in town density, I know we can do even better and be a shining example for the rest of MA

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

- a. Leverage – MA gives more money to the federal government than it receives, and we need to exercise that at an individual level. Key figures associated with the Trump administration need to be identified and negotiated with.

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

- a. I've always been transparent; I always tell my students why I'm teaching them something; I tell my customers why I charge what I charge and what it goes to; I communicate with colleagues very openly. I do all of this because at the heart of everything I do, the focus is on helping people succeed. Frank conversations, accessible meetings, clear email messaging, unambiguous social media content, and other channels are places where I can model this transparency and accountability.

(C) Yes/No Policy Questions

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? **YES/ NO**
 - a. **Absolutely 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/ NO**
 - a. **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/ NO**
 - a. **Yes**
4. Do you support fare-free public transit? **YES / NO**

- a. **Yes**
5. Do you support the expansion of the network of permanent, protected bike lanes in your city? **YES / NO**
- a. **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 / NO**
- a. **Yes**
7. Would you support a home rule petition to enable the city to stabilize rents? **YES / NO**
- a. **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. Would you oppose such book-banning efforts if they occurred in your city? **YES / NO**
- a. **Yes**

(D) Additional Comments

- I'm pro-union and was one of the first signers for SEIU at both Boston University and Northeastern when I was an adjunct
- We've never had free interns at my company; we always paid interns
- I was in the Boston Globe for my advocacy in helping to improve safety at one of MA's top-ten crash sites:
<https://www.boston.com/news/the-boston-globe/2025/05/30/screech-crash-bang-this-car-collision-chronicler-has-been-snapping-pictures-of-the-many-by-his-house/>
- My outdoor event company Ridj-it (www.ridj-it.com) has helped thousands of people without cars, the majority being immigrants and non-white people, access the outdoors in every state in New England
- A great portion of my teaching career involved teaching refugees of war and economies
- Using video and Twitter, I got the State Police banned from practicing crowd control/protest suppression exercises at UMASS Boston in 2020/2021
- I speak English, Spanish, and Russian; I've lived in Colombia, Spain, Russia, and Kazakhstan, and my campaign aims to bring the best of those places to Somerville