



2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

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Office Sought: District 2 City Councilor

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

My top three priorities are: first, restoring transparency to City Council Hearings and restoring as a matter of course access by the public to back up materials related to City Council Hearings for use during the City Council Hearings or Public participation; second, requiring a conflicts of interest training session at the beginning of each year of service for all City Councilors; third, restoring the position of Planning Board Director, vacant since 2018, to advise the Planning Board, the City Council and other City Departments on citywide zoning, citywide land use planning, citywide urban design, city wide transportation planning, citywide street safety (design and speed limits), and the DPW. Framingham city government does not have - and since 2018 has not had - a dedicated, multi-disciplinary planning staff to study infrastructure, urban design, natural resource protection, zoning, development and traffic. Every city or town of Framingham's 75,000 population has an independent professional position or department dedicated to planning. Citywide planning is to be distinguished from the completely different arena of development: the role of development director is to work on ad hoc projects.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I am qualified to hold this office on several levels and will be the only trained planner on the City Council if elected to this major responsibility of joining this legislative body - in the Charter designed to balance the power of the Mayor.

My qualifications are: Nine (9) years of service (2003-20012) on the Framingham Planning Board - 52 meetings per year, 5 hours at least per meeting time, and as Chair overseeing preparation of the 10- Year Master Plan, with an outside consultant; professional work since 1989 in my own law practice, across several fields of law, in service of grass roots nonprofits, artists, cultural organizations, individuals of modest means, recent immigrants to the United States, advocacy for "unspoken for" interests such as the environment, animal rights, and cultural preservation; and thirdly, professional work teaching at the Masters program at the MIT Real Estate Center a course in the law of the development process that provides expertise to review large, complex projects that might come to the City Council or elsewhere in City Hall. This life experience is what I bring to representing the people of Framingham, the place I grew up and to which I returned mid-career.

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

The urban policy that I saw adopted that most struck me as one to emulate is the entire downtown urban plan in Quebec's Old City. In the 1960's, when the Old City was physically run down and lacked private financial investment - just as Faneuil Hall and the Marketplace were in Boston, Quebec took a direction opposite to what the City of Boston chose. The City of Quebec purchased the dilapidated historic buildings in the Old City with a commitment and plan to publicly invest in the old city center, create city owned rental housing to promote a new, stable neighborhood and foot traffic; and for small businesses of creative people, for restaurants, for every day needs city owned commercial space. Thus rents are affordable. This has created a thriving and unusually "livable" city center for people of all kinds and interests whose community, homes and business are sustained by stable rent levels. The private investor component of renovating and developing this historic part of Quebec was removed. By contrast, the City of Boston sold the Faneuil Hall Marketplace, our historic city center and marketplace, to the Rouse Corporation. The Rouse Corporation did a very good job at historic restoration. However, the business model ultimately was to maximize the rate of return by turning this landmark into a tourist shopping center. We ought to consider the Quebec Old City example. The Framingham Housing Authority has done excellent recent housing work. See also the LaSell Village in Newton, which just received a major public financing for new condominiums, owned by a business partnership with Lasell College. Another nonprofit model.

(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?

Really the question is, how much work politically do we want to do, as allowed by the Massachusetts Constitution to raise revenue. If the status quo holds we must: 1) Recognize that residential real estate never pays for itself and recognize that "not building" provides income. ; 2. Commit to citywide zoning and land use planning that balances different kinds of municipal and social priorities so that our commercial tax base is assessed at values that keep pace both with the legally mandated full market value and inflation - Framingham's commercial tax base - one of the largest in Middlesex County is underperforming. The result is that residential owners are carrying a tax burden that might be too high. The second important policy is to recognize that protecting open space, uplands along rivers and ponds, forests and farmland has a net benefit. It does not demand public revenue. Framingham simply cannot build its way out of the current shortfalls in revenue needed for infrastructure upgrades, civic services such as schools, libraries, parks, cultural programs, athletic buildings and senior programs. We must recognize that the current Mayor and City Council's economic development policy is a race to the bottom.

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

Education is the greatest wealth we can confer on every child, regardless of the income of the parents and regardless of the child's country of origin or legal status in this country. Every child in America has a Constitutionally protected due process right to a public education K-12. Framingham must fund a humane, best educational practices based public school program. Teachers must be free to teach, teacher student ratios must allow students to be met "where they are". The school program also deserves a parent program: when the family has a relationship with the school each student and the school as a whole benefits. Arts and music must be a valued and financially supported part of the curriculum. Trade school amenities, such as the closed swimming pool at Keefe Tech must be repaired: we had \$1.5 million in COVID relief money. Why wasn't that used to repair the Keefe Tech pool, a civil asset now closed to everyone.

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

The degeneration of America into a federal police state is chilling. The Mayor must take a clear, public and unequivocal stand, as Mayor Wu has done, that ICE has boundaries in Framingham. No school property may be accessed. No municipal property may be accessed - and that includes parks, and city buildings and city sponsored programs. The Mayor and City Council should study what has been effective in other Massachusetts cities. We don't have to stand aside, or alone as a city government. Framingham City Council and the Mayor have been too quiet.

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?

The center of my policy begins with recognition that the Earth is one large natural system. Coexistence with other life forms is necessary. The City should 1) Heat: reduce the ratio of heat absorbing pavement - pavement is one of Framingham's largest land uses: zone to promote parking structures, not parking lots, design streets to calm traffic by making them narrower not wider; use building codes and zoning to reduce the size of paved surfaces; 2) Natural Cooling: citywide plant oak trees and other resilient shade trees; the building code should incentivize if not require designs for cool building interiors - building envelope design, operable windows and cross ventilation, limit lawn size and incentivize naturalized landscapes; 3) incentivize rooftop solar and mandate solar on all large, privately owned and city buildings with flat roofs or solar canopy potential. In 2011, as a member of the Framingham Planning Board, I voted with our Board majority to approve the REI parking lot solar canopy installation hoping it would become a town wide model. It is still unique in Framingham. The City has done nothing to promote this simple and beneficial installation. REI produces all of its own electricity. To my knowledge, the incumbent City Council has never discussed the topic.

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?

Public transit and pedestrian safety are among my first priorities. 1) Framingham has several unused light rail opportunities - existing rail beds that are not being used, including near Framingham State College. We must provide government sponsored public transit, including light rail as a 24/7, all season, car free city transit for people of all ages and different needs. Framingham State, for example, a commuter school with large parking lots doesn't have to be car dependent. There is a train spur right next to the FSU

campus that would permit students from Boston or Worcester to get to school in Framingham on the train. The Tech Park has a train spur. Saxonville has a train spur. 2) Join with neighboring towns to restart the train line just beyond Framingham's north border with Sudbury, that runs to Boston's North Station. That train was active in the 1960's and had a stop at Lanham Road and Rte. 20. We can use our status as one of the largest cities in Massachusetts to kickstart State investment in that train corridor and others to help commuters to get out of the millions of cars that for miles creep along Rte. 20, Rte. 128 and the Mass. Pike. 3) Immediately commence a Citywide speed limit review. Lower speeds to provide safe pedestrian sidewalks and crossings **and seating** along city roads. In 2024, a pedestrian walking along the edge of Edgell Road was killed accidentally by a driver in full daylight. Prior to that, a person on Edmands Road was killed accidentally by a driver as he stood by his mailbox. The same risk of fatalities or serious injury exists in downtown Framingham. The incumbent City Council has never brought up this topic.

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?

First, count all dwellings in Framingham to establish the "inventory". Second, count how many houses are currently used for Airbnb - a prohibited hotel use in single family zones. Count how many dwellings are investor owned and rented. Assess investor owned, or non owner occupied single family rental residential at a higher rate than owner occupied homes to provide real estate tax offsets for fixed income residents. Create a city office of home renovation assistance for small adaptations and routine repairs. Address why Framingham has one of the **highest** residential real estate tax rates in Massachusetts and burdens us.

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

The incumbent Mayor and incumbent City Council have failed to bring professional land use planning professionals on staff to advise the City how to interpret where, how and at what cost Framingham can integrate higher density residential development at affordable rates. The Council and City Hall ignored 3 years of planning time (used productively by other municipalities). We need to staff up to be ready for what comes next.

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

This is a tough question. Our State government is the best chance for financial resources to supplement local revenue. And raising voter participation next time.

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

Serving the public interest and transparency are my values. I will conduct all of my work as a City Councilor in public hearings, not back rooms or secret city hall meetings. When public information is lacking at public hearings, I will work to keep those hearings open until the public record is complete. I will advocate for residents to have timely access to printed back up material for hearings. I will at public meetings ask other boards and committees to update gaps in their public records and meeting videos on the city portal when inexcusable gaps exist. Open Meeting Law compliance is not optional.

(C) Yes/No Policy Questions

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? **NO**
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? **I support:** a Code that adopts rules that incentivize reduced residence sizes, less land clearing, and smaller building footprints; that reasonably limit the number of bathrooms per dwelling; that requires architectural design and shade from landscaping to reduce the need for air conditioning; that requires a high percentage of windows to be operable; that requires LED fixtures inside and outside, and requires light shielding to protect dark skies. No amount of stretch code will address current consumption levels of every kind of resource, whether it is electricity -and that requires a fuel -water-gas-oil-wood burning - pellet burning. Geothermal is an important energy source to investigate.
4. Do you support fare-free public transit? **We have to pay for public transit one way or another. Call it a tax or a fare.**

5. Do you support the expansion of the network of permanent, protected bike lanes in your city? **YES but not to the detriment of small business owners who require curb side parking for their customers. This cannot be a zero sum game. We need a citywide policy on multi-model transportation and protected pedestrian travel.**
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 YES The topic of rent control has interested me for a long time. In fact, my MIT Master's Thesis in 1981 is about rent control. That research was a comparison of the Brookline, Massachusetts and Boston, Massachusetts rent control by-laws. Looking at this subject now suggests how long a life cycle the idea has. I can bring this knowledge to the position of District 2, City Councilor and to the Framingham City Council. [We must recognize that rent control will result in lower assessed values for those buildings. That is the law.]**
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, mightily.**

(D) Additional Comments

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

My work and political career has been grass roots based. My commitment is to a democracy that respects the personal freedoms of its citizens and all persons. My commitment is to the rule of law, by which I mean we have no kings we have a constitution. All persons are equal before the law. I watch what people do, not what they say.