



## 2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Fred Norton

Office Sought: Ward 5 City Councillor Salem MA

Website: N/A

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### (A) Your Candidacy

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

A. Affordable homes for working families.

Every family deserves a safe, stable place to live, and we need policies that make housing attainable for the people who keep Salem running.

B. Stronger services that treat people with dignity.

From food access to transportation, our systems should not just meet needs but respect the worth of every person they serve.

C. Transparent, principled leadership.

I believe in open communication and making decisions guided by principle, not politics, so residents can trust their government.

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

I have spent most of my life in health and human services, Harvard Kennedy school of government studied my Senior transportation program, I currently run logistics for The Salem Pantry and distribute food to almost 2000 families across the North Shore. I am not only familiar with how to improve city level systems and design them. I am also deeply familiar with Salem and the region's attempts to deal with many of these issues.

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

Housing first. I think it's the single most crucial development tool at our disposal there are some things which we are handcuffed on at the municipal level, (e.g. rent control) but these are concrete steps that can be taken.

## **(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?**

There are really two main paths: strengthening our existing tax base and finding ways to leverage unique opportunities. In Salem, tourism gives us some extra options, but the more durable solution is to support not just the middle class but also the working class. By creating not only more jobs, but jobs that actually pay well, we expand the tax base in a way that benefits everyone.

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

First, we need to limit charter school expansion, which drains resources from our public schools. At the same time, we should increase salaries and budgets for teachers to attract and retain talent. For Salem specifically, the construction of a new high school is a critical priority. Several key votes will determine the project's scope and budget, and I intend to play an active role in ensuring we get it right.

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

We've already taken some important steps. I've attended nonprofit sector seminars on what to do if ICE shows up at our facilities. My position is simple: I will do everything legally possible to hinder their operations. Protecting immigrant communities is part of protecting Salem as a whole.

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?**

Being a coastal city, climate change impacts Salem directly. My top three priorities are:

- A) Seawall and shoreline redesigns – short-term but necessary defenses to reduce day-to-day damage.
- B) Expanded bike infrastructure – we already have a good city bike program, but it must continue to grow.
- C) Green building and public space expansion – more parks and environmentally responsible construction.

Equity runs through all of these: climate resilience must benefit every neighborhood, not just the most affluent.

**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?**

This is complicated by the fact that many Salem residents work off-shifts, outside the 9–5 schedule, and can't always rely on public transit. To address this:

- A) Assess and expand hours of service for options like the Salem Skipper and the MBTA.
- B) Build out these systems so driving isn't the default.
- C) Expand existing programs, such as the low-cost municipal taxi service, and improve bicycle lane safety and markings.

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

I support using inclusionary zoning to lower the AMI threshold for affordability—ideally to 50% of units at 50% AMI. While not as powerful as rent control, it creates more opportunities for nonprofit developers to build genuinely affordable housing, rather than leaving the work to for-profit developers who price people out.

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

I think Salem is ahead of the curve here, and that's something to be proud of. My focus will be to make sure we stay there and don't fall behind as the state continues to raise expectations.

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

First, we need to be prepared to bring lawsuits. Cities have the right to push back, and we must make it clear when federal actions cross the line between policy-making and politically motivated targeting. Salem's strength will come from standing firm and standing with other municipalities.

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

For me, transparency means giving residents the full picture. That means writing out policies in long form, explaining not just the surface but the nuances—the costs, the trade-offs, and the benefits. The more accurate information people have, the less room there is for misinformation to take root.

**(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.)*