



2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

We need to fix city services. Attrition from the current mayor making union municipal employees wait years and years for a new contract has left key departments badly understaffed, and the programs and services residents and businesses depend on have suffered badly. We will rebuild that municipal workforce, look to innovate to improve programs and services, then use meaningful data to measure the success of our approaches to determine what's working.

Somerville's housing crisis demands that we dramatically increase our stock of affordable housing. From serving on the Winter Hill Civic Advisory Committee and overseeing the urban renewal plan at 299 Broadway, I know the tools we used to unlock a remarkable project set to break ground next month, with 136 new affordable rental units at 30 percent and 60 percent of area median income. I want to use those tools – a UCH-TIF tax break, subsidization from developer linkage fees in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and creative use of grants like the MassWorks grant in conjunction with the Somerville Community Land Trust – to get developments of similar quality built elsewhere in the city. I also want to work with the state to bring social housing to Somerville.

I want to make our streets safe for everyone, whether they're walking, using a mobility aid, biking, or driving in Somerville. That involves modifying behavior

by changing the built environment through infrastructure work. We also need to improve lighting and improve our street repaving and sidewalk reconstruction programs to prioritize the safety of everyone, regardless of mobility mode and ability.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I've been elected twice to citywide public office, serving now for two terms as a City Councilor-At-Large, chairing the Finance Committee and overseeing the annual budget review process every year during that time. I've also served on the Land Use Committee the past three years, so I understand how zoning works, as well as the municipal government as a whole.

Prior to my time on the council, I have executive experience from years of leading local non-profit organizations, and a communications background from decades in communications and journalism before that. I know how to lead and manage in a way that gets the best out of people, and these are the skills I'll bring to the office of mayor.

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

There are so many great things I see other cities doing and would like to emulate here, but I'll pick one really simple, basic thing that Somerville has yet to figure out how to do: install standalone outdoor public restrooms. We have three of these restrooms next door in Cambridge, while Greenfield and Provincetown have installed them now as well.

Somerville has approved the funds for these Portland Loos, but we're told the delivery and installation are held up by a concern about state building code. We need to find a way to get these up and running in Somerville, because everyone needs to go to the bathroom.

(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 need to negotiate new Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreements with the larger non-profit organizations in our city – notably Tufts University and MassGeneralBrigham. We have a PILOT Advisory Task Force that delivered

recommendations, so let's implement those and start bringing in more money from large non-profit organizations who are based in Somerville but don't pay property taxes while requiring City services.

Somerville should charge the maximum three percent Short-Term Rental Community Impact Fee to bring in more revenue from Airbnb and similar companies operating in our city.

Given the recent cost of living spike, it's also worth revisiting our fines to make sure they're still appropriate to incentivize behavior. Increased fines could result in additional income.

Recently the Boston City Council took up the question of a 15-cent local food delivery fee, before ultimately deciding not to proceed with it. Somerville could explore this option.

If the Municipal Empowerment Act on Beacon Hill were to be approved, it would allow Somerville to raise existing excise taxes on meals, lodging, and motor vehicles, generating additional local revenue.

We would need enabling state legislation or approval of a home rule petition to do extremely impactful things like instituting a real estate transfer fee that would generate an estimated \$6 to \$10 million per year in funding for affordable housing creation, as well as alcohol and tobacco excise taxes and a local sales tax. I've previously testified at the State House in favor of a local option on transfer fees, and I'll lead and build coalitions in support of these things as mayor.

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

The new contracts recently ratified by SEU members contain some excellent gains. I'm particularly heartened by the increased compensation for paraprofessionals and 12 weeks of paid parental leave. These are personal for me, as my mother still works as a paraprofessional and paid family and medical leave has been a policy priority of mine as a councilor. As mayor I look forward to working with the School Committee and SEU to build on this progress to make Somerville Public Schools a model for public education in the region.

I've been out knocking doors since March, and I've lost track of how many public school teachers I've met who live in Somerville but teach in other

districts. For some this is a preference, as they'd rather not work in the district where they live and where their children attend school. But for many, it's about better compensation elsewhere. We also want to make sure Somerville educators can afford to live here. For all these reasons, I want to make sure Somerville is truly competitive with neighboring communities when it comes to educator compensation.

My father is a retired high school science teacher, and I know how much working conditions impacted not just his happiness in his job, but also his ability to teach. We have school buildings where the physical conditions aren't conducive to learning – particularly in the spring and fall when seasons are changing and an unseasonably cold or warm day can leave schools chilly or overheated. We need to have modern, efficient school buildings to create an environment conducive to learning and appropriate for work, while also meeting our climate goals.

Larger class sizes increase the challenge for teachers to meet students' individual needs, especially when there is no paraprofessional. I have SPS parents ask about teachers' ability to know what's happening with each of their 20-plus students in these larger sections. Getting to a more optimal ratio has to be a priority for the district.

As mayor, I'm excited by the prospect of serving on the School Committee in an ex-officio capacity, because I'm looking forward to the policy and curriculum discussions. I know the tension between standardized curriculum and flexibility for educators. My father taught chemistry and physics in an unconventional way, but I know from correcting exams for him and from the conversations I had with his students how he made the material come alive to his students. My educator friends talk about the frustrations they have with the pressures of teaching to the test and standardized curriculum, so I'm interested in exploring differentiated lesson plans.

One of the major areas of concern from the community is our ability to provide quality special education so we're meeting the needs of all SPS students. Yes, special education is complicated and can be expensive, but we have a legal and moral obligation to get this right and I want to see SPS do better in this area.

From conversations with friends in education, I hear a lot of concerns about technology, specifically smart phones and artificial intelligence. This is something I believe needs to be monitored and addressed, and I'd love to work with SEU and the School Committee on this as mayor.

I'm also interested in seeing where we go as a state in the post-MCAS graduation requirement era, as far as graduation requirements. I knocked doors on behalf of Yes on 2 and was elated to see MCAS dropped as a graduation requirement. With legislation introduced to establish MassCore as a graduation requirement in Massachusetts, that would require significantly more state funding during a period of austerity. But we won't be in austerity mode forever, so I'm very curious what ends up happening around graduation requirements at the state level.

The disparities in school performance as mentioned later in this questionnaire are a major issue for SPS. We have some elementary schools performing at an elite level and other schools in the same district flirting with state intervention. I want to see SPS gather and report data on family income and education levels by school to better capture why this is happening, then come up with a plan to address these inequities.

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

Somervillians want to know what can be done about gangs of masked federal agents abducting neighbors from homes, workplaces, and on our streets.

First, it's important to know what can't be done. The Supremacy Clause in the U.S. Constitution holds that federal laws reign supreme, so we can't pass state or local laws that supersede federal law. But that doesn't mean we are powerless. There are things we can do within the law to protect our community from federal lawlessness.

The City should continue conducting Know Your Rights workshops, ramping up the number of these in partnership with community leaders, and expanding the languages offered. The City should make sure Know Your Rights content is widely distributed in multiple languages on social media and in videos and citywide mailings.

The public needs to know that if they witness an I.C.E. action, they should report it to LUCE at 617-370-5023, then take video from a safe distance after announcing they are recording.

If police are dispatched to the scene, they can ask unidentified, masked agents to identify themselves and their agencies. Police also can inspect the

detainer and determine whether it is criminal or merely civil, and convey that crucial information to the impacted residents.

We should look to deploy rapid response legal assistance at the first report of ICE activity to advise our targeted residents on legal matters.

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?

Any new or renovated municipal and school buildings need to be carbon neutral at minimum. And we need to be going back and decarbonizing our existing municipal and school buildings, starting with our schools located in environmental justice block groups.

We're seeing increased flooding issues as a result of climate change and more extreme weather events. We have a priority-ranked list of flooding mitigation projects, and it's important that we factor in whether these projects are planned in areas of the city with environmental justice populations.

In a city where approximately 60 percent of our dwelling units are rentals, the challenges of upgrading the energy efficiency of these units are particularly acute. The new MassSave incentives aimed at rental units can help, but we need to be helping connect property owners with these incentives and making sure they're pursuing this work.

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?

The City of Somerville's Somervision 2040 plan has a target of achieving a 75-percent mode share for sustainable transportation. This is ambitious yet essential. During the recent pandemic, societal dependence on private vehicles increased. This shift was further compounded by a series of negative media reports and operational challenges experienced by the MBTA during the same period.

As the region emerges from the pandemic, encouraging trends have begun to materialize. Commuter Rail ridership has surpassed pre-pandemic levels, and ridership on the Blue and Orange lines has similarly improved. Progress in MBTA performance and reliability under General Manager Phillip Eng has contributed to renewed public confidence in the transit system.

While public perception and narrative play significant roles, the ultimate measure of success lies in the quality of service and rider experience. Accordingly, advocacy for improvements to Somerville's bus routes remains critical. Priorities include increasing service frequency, enhancing real-time

information for passengers, and simplifying fare payment and validation processes. The persistent challenges of north–south transit connectivity continue to impact residents, workers, and visitors alike; addressing these needs will remain a focal point, whether through collaboration with the MBTA or partnerships with private providers.

Cut-through commuter traffic represents one of the primary sources of vehicular congestion within Somerville. Long-term solutions include the implementation of regional congestion pricing and significant expansion of Commuter Rail ridership. In the interim, however, it is imperative to adopt aggressive measures to reduce cut-through traffic within the city. This approach involves both direct interventions to prevent such traffic at the source and innovative strategies to discourage the practice. Reducing cut-through commuter volumes will alleviate street congestion, improve public safety, enhance environmental quality, and advance Somerville's climate objectives.

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?

Backing affordable housing is table stakes for running for office in Somerville. It's easy to say you support affordable housing, but reversing the recent downward trend in affordable units in the pipeline will require focus and creativity. I'll use the aforementioned tools in our toolkit to spur the creation of large numbers of affordable units to make real inroads on our affordability crisis.

We need a wide range of different housing types, from co-housing and studios and one-bedrooms for younger residents and seniors, to multi-bedroom units for families.

The Healey Administration's embrace of social housing is a welcome one, but other municipalities already have determined that state programs need tweaking before they make sense to pursue. I'll work with our state delegation to iron out those wrinkles and bring social housing to Somerville.

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

Somerville was one of the first communities in Massachusetts to achieve compliance with the MBTA Communities Act. We did so back in December 2023 by making multi-family housing (three-plus units) by right in all Neighborhood Residential (NR) zoning districts in the city, removing the Steep Slopes Ordinance that required a special permit for certain types of lots, and removing the prohibition on cohabitation by more than four unrelated persons. These were simple, straightforward fixes that very quickly and easily brought us into compliance, honoring both the spirit and letter of the law.

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

The City of Somerville and the Somerville School Committee both have filed lawsuits against the Trump Administration over funding withheld from Somerville. We need to be prepared to file additional legal challenges with the courts, ideally as part of partnerships with numerous other municipalities to reduce the focus on just Somerville.

Somerville needs to play the game and clearly document our legal compliance with grants, including proactively drafting compliance memos. We also should prevent complicity by prohibiting collaboration with the federal government on anything that runs counter to our values as a community and limiting the data we collect so it can't inadvertently be used against Somervillians, should it fall into federal hands.

We also need to have continuity plans in place in case the worst does happen and we find ourselves short of significant federal funding.

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

I'll start by reopening the Mayor's Office door. We're over two years out from the official end of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the Mayor's Office door remains closed and locked. This is a source of great frustration for the people of Somerville, and we'll change that on Day One.

I'll hold regular office hours at City Hall on Thursday nights, when constituents can come talk to their mayor. I won't need to hold "listening sessions" as the current mayor does, because I'm always in listening mode.

We will change how the City communicates with the public, allowing constituents to specify communication preferences, both the medium and the topics they want to know about. We'll be bringing in a multilingual mobile app and creating information portals on everything from municipal finance to public and private development. We will switch the focus from public relations to traditional communications and public information, including a new focus on video.

(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? **ALREADY ADOPTED**
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

This campaign isn't backed by outside interests, corporate PACs, or real estate money. In fact, I don't take money from anyone with business before the city, beyond a routine license or permit. We've raised more money from the people of Somerville than the other two campaigns combined. This campaign is powered by people: neighbors, small business owners, and first-time volunteers who believe in the promise of Somerville.

High-quality recent polling by a renowned pollster has us nominating in next month's preliminary election and then favored head to head in November against either potential opponent. We have raised over \$23,000 in the past six weeks – predominantly from individual contributors in Somerville – and we believe strongly that we're on course to victory this fall.