



## 2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Jason Mackey

Office Sought: Somerville City Council, Ward 5

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

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

1. Housing: Expanding the overall housing supply, strengthening affordability, and ensuring Somerville remains a place where working families, seniors, and young people can live.

2. City Services: Making government work better for residents by improving constituent services, fixing infrastructure, and holding departments accountable.

3. Civil Rights & Community Safety: Defending vulnerable communities, expanding mental health services, and building a city where everyone feels safe and included.

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

I am a renter, a business owner, and an active community leader. I've served as Diversity Officer of the Ward 5 Democratic Committee since 2021 and as Interim Chair of the Somerville Human Rights Commission, where I've worked to defend civil rights, expand housing opportunities, and bring more transparency and accountability to local government. Professionally, I've founded and scaled startups and now serve as an early-stage investor, giving me executive experience in building organizations, managing budgets, and solving complex problems. My lived experience as a gay Black man, son of a

single mother, and entrepreneur gives me both the perspective and the skills to advocate effectively for Ward 5.

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

Cambridge recently adopted zoning reforms allowing buildings up to six stories by right, with added affordability requirements. Somerville should follow suit. It's a clear, practical way to increase housing supply, affordability, and climate-resilient density.

**(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?**

Somerville should pursue a home rule petition for a transfer fee on luxury real estate sales to fund affordable housing. We should also expand PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) agreements with our large nonprofit institutions and ensure that development fees and linkage payments are used effectively.

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

1. Fully funding schools and ensuring classrooms have the staff and resources they need.

2. Strengthening wraparound supports for students; including after-school programming, mental health, and language justice.

3. Investing in safe, modern school facilities so that students learn in an environment that reflects our values.

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

Somerville must remain a sanctuary city, refuse cooperation with ICE, and expand access to legal aid and city services regardless of immigration status. Community safety means investing in trust-building, language access, and unarmed crisis response options, not deportation and fear.

**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?**

1. Expanding the tree canopy, especially in environmental justice neighborhoods.

2. Investing in green infrastructure: permeable surfaces, flood prevention, and sustainable stormwater management.

3. Electrifying city buildings and vehicles.

Equity must guide these investments: frontline communities most affected by climate change should benefit first.

**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?**

I support expanding protected bike lanes, improving sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure, and making bus service more reliable and accessible. Parking policies should reflect true demand while prioritizing mobility and equity.

**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?**

I support zoning reforms to expand housing supply, strengthening inclusionary housing requirements, and new funding streams (like a real estate transfer fee) for affordable housing. I also believe we must invest in senior housing, tenant protections, and first-time homebuyer supports so people can stay in Somerville throughout their lives.

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

Somerville has met its obligations under the MBTA Communities Act with relatively little controversy. Which is testament of our city's longstanding commitment to smart growth. But simple compliance should be a floor, not a ceiling. We need to go further by embracing robust upzoning that creates meaningful opportunities for new housing near transit, expands affordability, and ensures that Somerville continues to lead the region on sustainable, equitable development.

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

I would support city efforts to pursue litigation against unlawful federal actions, expand sanctuary protections, and safeguard funding for housing, healthcare, and education. Somerville should also strengthen partnerships with neighboring municipalities and the state to form a united front.

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

I will hold regular office hours, publish clear reports on votes and initiatives, and respond promptly to constituent concerns. Transparency also means saying where I stand, even when it's politically inconvenient, and making decisions based on facts and community needs.

**(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.)*

Somerville is a city too important to be held back by incrementalism or political games. Too often, we get lost in bike-shedding debates while the real challenges -- housing, equity, climate, democracy itself -- demand bold action. We are one community, one family, and the threats we face from a resurgent Trump administration make clear that local leadership matters now more than ever. Progressive values of inclusion, justice, and solidarity aren't just ideals, they are the tools we need to protect our neighbors and secure our future. I am committed to building a Somerville where everyone has a home, a voice, and a future.