



## 2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: John Hunt

Office Sought: City Council, Ward 5 - Salem, MA

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### (A) Your Candidacy

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

- a. Affordable Housing
- b. Safer street design and layout for residents and all modes of transportation
- c. Making sure Salem's strong tourist season works for year-round residents

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

I'm running for City Council because I believe Ward 5 deserves a representative who not only shares our values, but also understands our everyday challenges. Growing up, I watched as my mother had to navigate city and state assistance programs, so I understand what interacting with your local government can look like.

As an active member of the community, I know what it means to face a rising cost of living, to navigate our streets and sidewalks, and to want safe, welcoming neighborhoods for our families.

My professional experience has taught me how to listen, build consensus, and solve problems; all skills that are essential on the City Council. Most

importantly, I'm committed to being present, accountable, and a true voice for Ward 5 at City Hall.

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

I would like to see Salem work with State legislators so we can follow in the footsteps of some European cities that are seeing a large increase in tourism and implement/increase our tourist or city tax.

We should be proud that so many people want to come visit our city, but it needs to work for the people that live here. As people are being priced out of their homes at an alarming rate and the prospect of homeownership moves closer to a joke for people than a dream, we should be able to use all the tools at our disposal to generate revenue and fund programs that help people that build Salem into the destination that it is.

**(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?**

I am willing to entertain any idea around bringing money into the City of Salem. My ultimate goal, as stated above, would be to work with the state legislature to remove the limits cities and towns face around taxing power and to ultimately introduce a tourist tax on all hotels, airbnb's, and short-term rentals. I would also like to see a temporary city tax during the months of August, September, and October that is akin to the state meals tax.

I also believe we need to do everything we can to attract new businesses of all sizes to Salem. By increasing the pool of business tax payers, we are able to eventually shift the burden from the residents of Salem which, hopefully, offers relief during a time when people are seeing rising costs for things across the board.

Recently, the city of Seattle approved the placement of digital kiosks throughout the city. Not only will these kiosks serve as a great tool to let people know about events and attractions that are happening in Salem, it will also be a way for the city to sell ad space to businesses in the region. With over

a million people coming to Salem in October alone, this could be an easy, inconspicuous way to generate incremental revenue

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

As someone who struggled as a student, I understand the impact it can have when meaningful investments are made in the public school system.

Investing in our teachers should be our top priority. Making sure teachers are paid not just a living wage, but a wage that reflects the importance of their role is paramount. Offering first class health insurance, retirement benefits, and Maternity or Paternity leave should be the floor of what we offer to our public school teachers, not the ceiling.

Also, more specific to Salem right now, I fully support building a new high school in Salem. Not only is it the only option in terms of fiscal responsibility, we should be providing the best environment possible for our students to receive an education in. By attracting the best teachers possible, retaining those teachers, and putting faculty, staff, and students, in a building they are proud of and enjoy working and learning in, we can do that.

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

The best thing our City can do right now is make sure we are always coming together for those that are in need. It may not be first nature for people and may be uncomfortable for some, but we need to make sure we are protecting our most vulnerable people and communities when they come under attack.

Further, I will also openly support any state legislation that would ban law enforcement officers from wearing any type of masks or face coverings and if there is any opportunity for us to accomplish this goal at the city level, it would be one of the first ordinances I would propose, as it should be something that passes with little resistance. Masked agents kidnapping people off of American streets should have no home in this country and certainly has no home in Salem.

**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. Protect our waterfront: Invest in natural and engineered flood defenses to keep homes, businesses, and neighborhoods safe from storms and rising seas.
2. Clean, reliable energy: Expand solar, storage, and local microgrids so schools, fire stations, and critical services stay powered during outages.
3. Greener, cooler neighborhoods: Plant more trees, add green roofs, and improve stormwater systems to reduce flooding and heat in our neighborhoods.

**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?**

1. I will work with the MBTA and the State so we can come up with ways to expand local bus service in the area. In this same vein. I will also reach out to surrounding cities and towns to see if there is any viability for a regional bus system built on the same premise as MeVA and LRTA.
2. I will support expanded, protected bike lines throughout Salem alongside wider sidewalks, raised crosswalks, and narrower streets to encourage slower travel from cars on the street and an increase in active transportation for those who can.
3. I will also continue to lead Salem towards smart development and ensuring an increased housing inventory in areas closer to public transit, including bus lines, to encourage people to use something other than a vehicle for errands that need to be taken care of within Salem

**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?**

This list is in no order. These steps must be taken simultaneously to truly tackle the housing crisis facing our residents.

1. From day one, I will fight to get rent control legalized at the state level. Making sure people have the peace of mind knowing their rent won't increase by 20,30, or 50% at the end of their lease will give them the peace of mind necessary to lay roots in Salem, invest in our city, and save for their future. Further, this is a great safeguard for our senior community or anyone else who may be living on a fixed-income. Making sure the people that are already here and have been here for an extended period of time should be our main priority.

2. Salem must make aggressive investments in market-rate housing. Like we are seeing in cities nationwide, there is not enough housing in Salem to meet the demand that we are seeing. By getting our housing supply to a spot where it meets demand, we can naturally rest the market for single family homes, multi-family homes, condos, and apartments in Salem.
3. We must incentivize developers to invest in Salem. Through a combination of tax breaks and incentives, updated zoning laws, and cuts to parking minimums, we can make Salem the most enticing location in the commonwealth for people and companies looking to build new housing.

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

Thankfully, Salem was ahead of the curve on this. While there is still work to be done, I applaud the efforts of past and present administrations for leading the charge on this issue.

As the next Ward 5 Councillor, I would make sure we are looking into various, out-dated zoning laws, building requirements, and parking minimums to make sure we are doing everything we can to make Salem an attractive place for developers to come and build new housing that our residents can afford.

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

Unfortunately, I think this is something we are beginning to realize is easier said than done. We are dealing with a vindictive, wannabe dictator and he should be handled as such.

When talking about this, I often think about a study done by Erica Chenoweth from The Carr Center for Human Rights that shows how “The 3.5% Rule” is an effective tool when protesting an oppressive or otherwise problematic regime. In its most basic terms, [her study showed that no government has withstood a challenge of 3.5% of their population being mobilized during a peak event.](#) Obviously, Salem is nowhere close to 3.5% of the population of the United States, but I think this speaks to the power that we have as the people.

Former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis once said that the most important political office is that of private citizen. Should I be elected, I have zero intention of vacating my role as a citizen and I will continue to use my

voice and use my platform to encourage and organize others to use their voice. If we all rise together, we will be heard and we can resist the gross overreach of our current administration.

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

Transparency, Accountability, and availability are cornerstones of what it means to be an elected official. As the Ward 5 city councilor, I will welcome conversation and critique from all residents of Salem. I will encourage residents to reach out to me through a number of different digital methods, I will be posting regular city updates on social media for those who follow them, and I plan to hold regular office hours so people can gather, speak with me, and speak with each other.

I have very strong opinions on things, but I also know that I don't have all the answers. As someone who works for the people, I will welcome the feedback and suggestions of the community to help guide us as we move towards a Salem that works for all residents.

### (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? **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 - should be noted that I think it is imperative that the definition of "high-end" is clear, concise, and worded in a way that only the wealthy/ultra-wealthy are paying this transfer fee**

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.)*