



2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: John Newhall

Office Sought: Ward 2 Salem City Councillor

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

- a. Communication & Engagement
- b. Pedestrian Safety & Traffic Calming
- c. Housing & Affordability

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

The only thing that qualifies someone for elected office is an election. The reasons I believe I will make a strong Ward 2 Councillor in Salem are not qualifications necessarily but constitute beneficial experience. I've lived in Salem my whole life. What Ward 2 in Salem needs, more than anything, is a community leader committed to listening, communicating, and service. My background demonstrates that I am rooted in service. Trained in Unitarian Universalist ministry and experienced in nonprofit leadership, I have cultivated my collaborative leadership abilities.

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

(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?**

Salem is a well-known tourist destination. I am particularly interested in ways to raise revenue from tourists who can strain our essential city services rather than keeping the burden solely focused on residents.

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

This is best understood as a focus for the Salem School Committee, rather than the Salem City Council. As a result, my top priority will be collaboration with the School Committee members on all relevant issues.

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

The City of Salem has already passed a Sanctuary for Peace ordinance that restricts City employees from asking about immigration status and reinforces the Police Department's policy against engaging in immigration-based investigations or inquiring as to a person's immigration status. This ordinance, however, does not go far enough. As we witness the federal government's persecution of immigrants, Salem must push back without placing its marginalized at further risk. Further restricting how Salem police officers are permitted to work with federal law enforcement is essential, as ICE is frequently deputizing the ATF, FBI, DEA, and US Postal Inspectors. I urge all residents to familiarize themselves with LUCE (lucemass.org / 617-370-5023).

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 Public Transportation Options - Salem is primed to become less car-dependent. Through the Salem Skipper, we have laid the groundwork for local public transit options. Over the next few years this could be expanded through local electric buses. Additionally, adding the second MBTA Commuter Rail stop will make it easier for South Salem residents, Salem State students, and more to access the downtown without a personal vehicle.
2. Green Energy - Salem is already on the cutting edge of green energy. We need to keep moving in this direction by further requiring green energy benchmarks for new developments, renovating municipal buildings with green energy, and centering climate resilience in all infrastructure discussions.

3. Infrastructure Improvements - As a coastal city, we must work to mitigate the effects of erosion and rising sea levels. Various areas of the city have experienced increased flooding including the northeast corner of the Salem Common and Bridge Street. Addressing our infrastructure through capital projects is essential to creating a climate resilient Salem.

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?

Well designed and well crafted bike lanes are integral to creating a sustainable transit network throughout Salem. There have been some significant missteps in recently installed bike lanes (ie. Washington Street). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the MBTA, is primarily responsible for the major public transit opportunities in Salem (the ferry, commuter rail, and Buses). City Councillors should empower and support the Mayor to work with neighboring cities to push for increasing the train sizes and frequency as well as possibly restoring the tracks between Salem, downtown Peabody, and the Northshore Mall. The Salem Skipper has laid the groundwork for a local bus system. A downtown bus that heads out Highland Ave. to the hospital, grocery stores, and other necessities on a regular schedule will decrease local dependence on personal vehicles.

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?

Salem must do more to encourage the production of age restricted, income restricted, and affordable units of housing. Residents of Salem who want to live here should never be forced out due to rising costs of living. Salem must increase the number of affordable units in our housing supply while addressing root causes of rising rents. In addition to supporting well planned and thought through projects, I will advocate for reestablishing rent controls within the Commonwealth and Salem.

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

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

I'm not sure it is smart to lay out resistance strategies in such a public way. I will strongly oppose federal overreach in order to protect all residents of Salem. To start, we must make sure we are not complying in advance with questionable or possible federal directives. We must also make sure our municipal systems are not being used to benefit the overreach of federal agencies (this requires significant oversight of the Police and record keeping systems throughout the city).

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

I commit to being accessible. I will justify my votes through conversations and through a regular newsletter. A ward councillor's primary job is as a communicator between residents and City Hall. I will solicit feedback from my constituents in order to make sure I am serving them to the fullest.

(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. 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.)