



## 2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Joseph M. Petty

Office Sought: City Councilor at Large and Mayor

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### (A) Your Candidacy

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

First, Strong Schools & Connected Communities. We are working to replace Burncoat High School, improve East Middle School, and expand high-speed internet access citywide. Second, Safe, Engaged Neighborhoods. I would continue to invest in and partner with WPD along with neighborhood leaders on public safety initiatives and strengthen community policing and resident engagement. Third, Housing & Economic Opportunity for All. I would work to expand affordable housing, launch the Community Impact Fund with contributions from private colleges, and grow Worcester through inclusive economic development. I will achieve these by building consensus, leveraging partnerships, and ensuring decisions reflect resident input.

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

I am the longest-serving mayor in Worcester's history, with a proven record of building consensus and delivering results. Over the past decade, I have overseen more than \$2 billion in public and private investment across the city, including new schools, housing, and infrastructure improvements. As chair of the School Committee, I've fought for education funding and strong leadership, and as mayor, I've prioritized inclusive growth, public safety, and neighborhood engagement. My deep knowledge of city government, strong relationships at the state and federal levels, and commitment to collaboration uniquely position me to continue serving Worcester effectively.

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

I am impressed by Springfield's efforts to expand neighborhood-based police beat management teams. These teams meet regularly with residents to address local issues and build relationships. They not only improve visibility and response times, but also give residents a way to connect with officers in a more approachable, day-to-day setting. I believe a model like this could strengthen community policing here in Worcester by deepening trust and ensuring public safety services are more accessible.

**(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?**

Worcester must continue to be creative in raising revenue while keeping the tax burden fair. I support expanding partnerships with our nonprofit institutions, including through the Community Impact Fund, which will secure contributions from private colleges to help fund city services. We also need to maximize state and federal grants, as we did with ARPA and infrastructure funds, to invest in housing, schools, and public safety. Finally, we should explore targeted revenue options like linkage fees on large-scale development to support affordable housing, while advocating at the state level for more local flexibility.

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

My top priority is to make sure every Worcester student has access to a safe, modern, and supportive learning environment. Under my leadership, the city has secured more than half a billion dollars in new school investments. Since 2017, we've opened three state-of-the-art schools, and planning is underway for a new Burncoat High School, which is expected to be completed in the early 2030s.

As chair of the School Committee, I championed the search for Superintendent Rachel Monárrez and nominated Brian Allen as our current superintendent—both strong leaders committed to student success. I have been a vocal advocate for full funding under the Student Opportunity Act and

work closely with our state delegation to make sure Worcester gets its fair share. I've also spoken out against federal education cuts and even joined a federal lawsuit opposing the dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education.

Every decision I make in this area comes back to one simple goal: giving our students the tools, facilities, and opportunities they need to thrive, no matter their neighborhood or background.

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

Worcester is and will remain a welcoming city. When incidents like the recent ICE activity on Eureka Street happen, they can deeply shake the sense of safety among our immigrant neighbors. That's why I spoke out immediately, called for a full report, and requested a written policy clearly outlining how the city engages with ICE. I have consistently supported immigrant and refugee communities, standing with Afghan evacuees, Haitian refugees, and working alongside groups like the LGBT Asylum Task Force, RAFT, and local churches. I believe in meeting people where they are, listening to their concerns, and making sure they know Worcester is a place where they are safe and valued.

We have an executive order in place prohibiting any municipal employee, including police, from asking about immigration status, and I will continue ensuring all city staff are trained, using guidance from the Attorney General's office, on immigrant rights and city policy. Protecting our immigrant communities and ensuring genuine public safety means standing up to fear and intimidation, and making sure Worcester remains a city where everyone can live without 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?**

My top priorities for making Worcester more climate-resilient are: planting 1,000 new trees by 2026, fully implementing our Urban Forestry Master Plan, and advancing the Green Worcester Plan's sustainability goals. These efforts aren't just about the environment—they're about protecting health, improving quality of life, and making sure every neighborhood benefits from green investment.

Equity is central to this work. We'll focus on environmental justice neighborhoods first by targeting places where residents are most affected by heat, flooding, and poor air quality so that those who have historically been left

behind are the first to see the benefits. That means more trees, improved parks, better stormwater systems, and cleaner air where they're needed most. By combining strong climate action with an equity lens, we can make Worcester a greener, healthier, and more resilient city for everyone.

**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 want Worcester to be a city where everyone, no matter their age, ability, or neighborhood, can get around safely and affordably without relying on a car. That's why I'm committed to advancing our Vision Zero and Complete Streets policies, which prioritize safety for all users and reduce traffic-related injuries and fatalities.

I'll continue working with our Department of Transportation and Mobility to connect every neighborhood with a network of bike lanes, ADA-compliant sidewalks, and clearly marked, accessible crosswalks. We'll strengthen our Safe Routes to School program so more children can walk or bike to class confidently, and we'll keep supporting a fare-free WRTA to make public transit accessible to everyone. I'll also work to improve the WRTA's hub-and-spoke system so routes better connect neighborhoods directly, making transit faster and more convenient.

Together, these steps will create a healthier, more connected, and more sustainable Worcester for everyone.

**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?**

To keep Worcester affordable for residents at every stage of life, we need a mix of housing options that meet people's needs as they grow and change—from first apartments to family homes to senior and supportive housing. That means building at least 1,000 new units each year, including units that are affordable, market-rate, supportive, and transitional—and making sure those units are spread across our neighborhoods. I support transformative projects like the Great Brook Valley/Curtis Apartments redevelopment, which is modernizing and expanding affordable housing, as well as outside-the-box ideas like tiny homes, ADUs, and the Oriol Drive supportive housing project.

Affordability isn't just about new construction; it's also about stability. I will continue to champion policies that help people stay in their homes, especially seniors, through targeted assistance, property tax relief, and partnerships with community organizations. By combining strong housing production with measures to keep people housed, we can ensure Worcester is a city where people can find—and afford—a home at every stage of life.

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

Worcester is ahead of the curve when it comes to the MBTA Communities Act. Our existing zoning ordinance already meets the law's requirements for by-right multifamily housing near transit, and I'm committed to keeping us in full compliance. This isn't just about checking a box—it's about making sure Worcester is adding the kind of housing we need to stay affordable and competitive.

We've paired MBTA compliance with other housing initiatives, including adopting inclusionary zoning, expanding Accessory Dwelling Units, and advancing major projects like the Great Brook Valley/Curtis Apartments redevelopment. These efforts are helping us add the full range of housing options—from market-rate to affordable to supportive—that Worcester needs to grow while keeping our neighborhoods accessible to the people who live and work here now.

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

I have always believed Worcester must stand up for our residents and protect the services they rely on, no matter who is in the White House. When federal policies threaten our values or our funding, I work closely with our congressional delegation, our state legislative delegation, and local partners to defend our community's interests. That includes advocating directly in Washington, joining legal challenges when necessary. I joined the lawsuit opposing the dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education to make sure we continue to deliver critical services even in the face of federal cuts.

We've done this before: pushing back against harmful immigration actions by speaking out against ICE activity in our neighborhoods, advocating for full funding under the Student Opportunity Act, and securing millions in federal investment for infrastructure and public safety. Working with Senator Markey, Senator Warren, and Congressman McGovern, we've brought resources home for projects like Polar Park's infrastructure, improvements to Union Station, and neighborhood street and sidewalk upgrades.

My approach is steady and collaborative, but also firm. We need to protect our residents, safeguard essential services, and ensure Worcester keeps moving forward.

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

Transparency starts with communication. I am available to meet with residents, attend neighborhood meetings across the city, and make sure residents can reach me directly. As mayor, I've worked to televise and livestream city meetings, expanded language access for residents, and strengthened public engagement in major planning efforts. Accountability also means being honest about challenges and clear about how we're addressing them. I will continue to publish updates on city priorities, push for timely public reporting on projects and budgets, and ensure that decisions are made openly, with residents fully informed and engaged.

**(C) Yes/No Policy Questions**

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? **YES/ 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/ NO**
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/ NO**
4. Do you support fare-free public transit? **YES / NO**
5. Do you support the expansion of the network of permanent, protected bike lanes in your city? **YES / NO**
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 / NO**
7. Would you support a home rule petition to enable the city to stabilize rents? **YES / NO**
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 / NO**

**(D) Additional Comments**

*(Use this space to make any final comments you deem important for progressive voters assessing your candidacy.)*

Worcester is a city on the rise, and our progress must include everyone. My vision is for a Worcester that is affordable, sustainable, and welcoming for all. I want Worcester to be a city where every student can succeed, every neighborhood is safe, and every resident has a voice. I believe experience matters, but so does listening, and I remain committed to working hand-in-hand with residents to keep Worcester moving forward.