



2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

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Office Sought: City council; Ward 5 of Northampton

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(A) Your Candidacy

1. What would be your top three priorities if elected to serve?
 - 1) Ameliorating the crisis of austerity in our schools and redoubling commitments to public services
 - 2) Reassertion of the council's democratic authorities as part of a broader program of revitalizing municipal democratic function
 - 3) Fighting for rights of workers and tenants to strong unions, affordable housing and dignity in all matters of civic life

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I'm a Communist Party organizer with significant experience and dexterity in building political coalitions and exercising knowledge of labor law on the shop floor. I've lived in the Connecticut river valley for the vast majority of my life and been closely engaged with municipal politics since returning here in 2022. While I'm a first-time candidate, I'm running as part of the Support Our Schools (SOS) coalition, in which I've taken a leading role in matters of political structure, orientation and strategy. My knowledge of applied political economy and democratic process can enrich the social, economic and political life of Northampton, especially for working people and tenants such as myself who are politically marginalized in current conditions.

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

A cornerstone of my platform is the introduction of a labor standards commission along the lines of the one established in Minneapolis last year. Widespread wage theft, exploitation and violations of workers' rights are rampant, particularly in industries with lower union densities (e.g. food service). The effects of these abuses on the social, economic and political lives of workers are widespread and devastating, and I'm committed to developing an institutional means of scrutiny by which labor law can be enforced and new municipal protections can be researched, proposed and codified on our behalf.

(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?

At a minimum, maintaining our city's services must be prioritized over padding our reserves. Any sustainable fiscal model depends on new growth and retaining current revenue bases – with our schools and DPW struggling to keep up with basic needs, many families are choosing to send their children out of the district (a process which is improperly subsidized by the state), to move to nearby towns or to leave the city outright.

At the same time, many homeowners are already struggling with high tax rates, and furious that previous overrides have been put forward without specified purpose and led to the current “cash-rich, service-poor” municipal condition. Our current fiscal model depends on periodic Proposition 2½ overrides, but these are neither affordable for large sections of the population – especially retirees and newer homeowners – nor imminently necessary.

In short, I'm proposing a Keynesian alternative as an immediate measure. Our city relies disproportionately on a fiscal policy of funding capital projects in cash – one of several salient issues with our city's undemocratic capital planning, which takes place behind closed doors and offers no prioritization of projects. In my ward alone, pressing infrastructure issues remain unaddressed due to this shockingly inefficient approach. We must commit to reasonable estimations of municipal expenses and revenues, dedicate recurring resources to public services and fund necessary capital improvements with a clear strategic plan for financing the latter. Raising revenue starts with ensuring our city remains affordable for those who live here and committing our taxes to public, and publicly determined, needs.

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

Our incumbent mayor (who chairs the school committee) and council majority have taken an inconsistent, demeaning and anti-democratic posture against the school committee's majority. In collaboration with our incoming school committee, I intend to take part in both reversing the course of austerity and developing a strategic plan for the school department with respect to municipal resources. It is an essential obligation to ensure free bussing for all students in our district (barring exceptions for

school choice), as well as to provide sufficient staffing to fulfill basic legal obligations such as IEPs and to meet fundamental educational needs. Class sizes of 30 or more students, struggling arts and cultural programs, merged language classes and desperately understaffed core departments are matters of priorities in our city, not of means.

I'm further attentive to the strained, overwhelmingly privatized out-of-school resources for parents and children in our community. The legislative tasks are different, but convergent, between these two issues – I support opting in as a means of negotiating a stronger position for our schools, and seek to devise and implement public out-of-school programs.

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

Northampton's "Safe City" ordinance and commitments to sanctuary for marginalized people set an important baseline which we must defend in the face of the Trump administration's attacks. I maintain three further points: first, understaffed schools and cuts to front-office administration further endanger our children and increase the threat posed by ICE; second, know-your-rights trainings must be provided to the community as a public service; third, local police must be compelled to intervene when ICE and other deputized agencies contravene due process. Failure to provide identification or a relevant warrant signed by a judge constitutes kidnapping.

Circulation of LUCE hotline information has been a component of my campaign thus far and will continue to take priority as a function of civic life.

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) We need an immediate democratization of capital planning and a clear, systematized strategy for alternate funding streams, including financing and grants. The current CIP committee is constituted as an "advisory body to the mayor", which devises capital improvement plans behind closed doors and offers the public no insight into prioritization or urgency. As an example, a culvert in my neighborhood has been broken for nearly two years, leading to dangerous sinkholes and periodic, similarly dangerous flooding during severe storms. This, and countless other instances across the city, are climate justice issues.
 - 2) Our DPW, which resisted offering competitive wages and benefits prior to this year's contract negotiations, must be fully staffed by way of standing commitments to living wages for workers. Our department is currently holding a significant excess in its budget set aside for empty positions – while I disagree with the contention that this is an inherently nefarious budgeting practice, it is a pressing matter of climate resiliency. We are currently unable to keep up with anything from pothole and sidewalk repairs to severe winter weather, not so much from lack of funding as from chronic understaffing. These too are climate justice issues, disproportionately affecting residents with mobility and accessibility needs.
 - 3) Much of our current climate resiliency planning, by way of the Climate Action and Project Administration (CAPA), takes place with respect to city-owned buildings. While this is an

important start, we need to expand our approach. I think the city can take a more expansive and assertive approach through ordinances to seek stronger commitments from local businesses and community members – as a positive example, we have seen productive advances in the mitigation of light pollution by way of regulatory ordinance.

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 hope to see an expansion of PVRTA services, in particular as seasonal reductions in bus scheduling disproportionately affect the semi-permanent and permanent workers in service and retail industries. As it stands, defending funding for these services is paramount.

I generally oppose the current proposal of “Picture Main Street” (the principal downtown redevelopment project in contention in our community) given both its political-historical context and the broader erosion of municipal democratic processes, but I am open to other approaches to redesigning our downtown that are meaningfully oriented toward the needs of residents, particularly working people. Current half-measures being promoted in the name of progressive urbanism, such as reducing mandatory parking minimums without advancing a wider program for public transportation, don’t resolve transportation needs for students, tenants or workers, and can even intensify them.

As such, I believe we need to engage in a new approach of popular consultation to devise a redesign that better reflects the diverse concerns of our community, in particular those of cyclists and dependents on public transportation.

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?

7.

Among other concerns, I believe that Northampton should commission and then commit to a Housing Production Plan in coordination with the Housing Partnership. Our current approach to human geography and housing production, while strategic in a certain sense, does not clearly demonstrate its logic to the public, and correlates with various shady dealings on the part of our incumbent administration (e.g., repeatedly attempting to auction off the 33 King St. property prior to appraisal with a random minimum bid, as the building was known to require significant asbestos remediation that would deflate the lot’s valuation). A Housing Production Plan would systematize and in a sense democratize our approach, by at least opening our strategy for affordable housing production up to public deliberation. I’m further committed to struggling, in coordination with the proposed labor standards commission, for a living wage for all residents, and to expanding our means of public transportation as well.

Also among many other issues, including those listed above, we also need a strong provision of rent control should it be legalized by ballot referendum next year.

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

N/A

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

Beyond the priorities and approaches listed above, proactive inter-municipal communication around matters such as PVTAs funding will be essential. Strategic planning is an enormous challenge under a federal government that carries out widespread impoundment at will, but we must be prepared to levy municipal resources and lobby for emergency resources from the state to ensure that essential services (especially those necessary for working people) are preserved.

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

Our outgoing representative for Ward 5 has established a strong baseline for community engagement and constituent services that I intend to build upon. Regular office hours and newsletters have become a civic norm and a model for other wards to build upon, and I'm committed to maintaining these lines of contact – I believe this is more important than ever with a fascist federal administration endangering our community from countless angles.

(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**

Our Department of Community Care, ostensibly established to fulfill this role, collaborates with police and must be held accountable in the same way.

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.)