



## 2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Tristan R. Brown

Office Sought: Peabody City Councillor, at-Large

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

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

a. Public Safety. This doesn't just mean keeping the crime rate low. It means that every member of the community should feel safe and valued. Our campaign believes Peabody should follow the lead of cities like Salem and become a sanctuary city for transgender and non-binary individuals. We also want to do what we can to protect our immigrant population from unjust targeting by federal officials. That could mean something like working with non-profits who provide aid to immigrants or even creating an official reporting structure through the city to record ICE abductions of Peabody residents.

b. Public Health/the environment. With Republicans at the federal level eviscerating the EPA and environmental rules, cities need to step into the breach. Our campaign believes we need to solarize public buildings, encourage residential composting, and get more people on public transportation. In Peabody, our air quality is harmed by 3 fossil fuel-burning "peaker" plants. Energy efficiency and investments in renewable sources of energy will have an immediate benefit to our local public health.

c. Public education. Peabody public schools have not been adequately funded for quite some time. Teachers and other student-facing employees are being laid off without corresponding cuts to administrative staff. Our campaign has identified several sources of additional revenue that could be used for payroll

and facilities improvements. Furthermore, we believe that all students who need a bus in Peabody should be able to get one without additional cost. Currently, it can cost families between \$325 and \$650 to put their kids on a bus to school. This results in hundreds of additional cars on Peabody streets twice a day every school day. Plus, having to drive your kid to school is a serious imposition on working people.

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

I am a Peabody resident with 3 kids in Peabody schools (plus one recent graduate). I've been active in local politics as an activist since moving here in 2013 and wrote a column for the Salem News from 2022 until my present candidacy. Furthermore, I also served as an intern policy analyst in the office of former Boston City Councillor, Tito Jackson, and have extensive experience in government.

I believe in public service. I have no connections to pull upon. I have no friends in high places. That means, if I get elected, I won't owe anything to anyone. I am doing this only because it is required given the state of the world right now. We must form a bulwark against authoritarianism at the local level if we are to defeat it overall.

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

I think Peabody should adopt a transgender/LGBT sanctuary city ordinance like Salem and other cities. We have abundant local resources to replicate what was done there. I'm also really excited by a residential curbside compost rebate in Beverly and I think it could be implemented in Peabody in a cost-neutral manner.

### **(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?**

Peabody has a ban on sale of cannabis in the city. I believe this ban needs to be repealed and community host agreements negotiated so Peabody can get some of that revenue. I am also in favor of using municipal housing trusts as a

model to allow the city to create needed housing stock. Any excess revenue generated by a Trust could be moved into a fund for city services.

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

Similar to the last question – funding for student-facing employees (give them a raise) and maintaining our facilities. Even tax increases need to be on the table if it is a question of fully funding our schools. However, tax increases should always be a last resort and crafted to target the wealthiest first.

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

- a. Hold public hearings to document ICE activity and the effect on our community.
- b. Direct law enforcement to not comply with ICE detention attempts unless expressly required by state or federal law.
- c. Partner with community groups already serving our immigrant populations and see how city resources can be used to support of their missions.

**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?**

- a. Public transportation more generally, but free school buses for public school kids is an immediate way we can lower emissions.
- b. Install solar panels in Peabody to reduce reliance on fossil fuels (we have 3 peaker plants in the city owned by a quasi-state corporation MMWEC on city property).
- c. Protect existing open spaces from further development, but increase overall housing through construction of new units under a “stretch” code, making them overall energy efficient.

**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?**

Our campaign is firmly pro public transportation and our candidate is one of the 2% of Peabody residents who commute to work on public transportation. According to a "Peabody: Vision 2035" document created in 2024, approximately 81% of Peabody commuters drove to work alone. Anything that can be done to improve service and thus increase utilization of public transportation needs to be done.

50 years ago, Peabody had a street car. The railbed still exists and it runs from Peabody Square (center of town) to the Salem Commuter Rail. I want to know what can be done to bring the Peabody street car back and get folks using the train to get into Boston and ditching the car.

**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?**

Our campaign believes municipal housing trusts may offer a solution to the housing crisis. Essentially, municipalities can create something like an investment fund to purchase properties in particular zoning districts or identified by a planning board. The city can rehabilitate properties, make them energy efficient, convert some single-family units into multi-family units and either sell or rent out these units at a steep discount. These funds are then used to acquire additional properties. This is something that is done with great success in Britain and was even started by our city's namesake, George Peabody, in London in the 1860s. This is not as exotic an idea as some people might think. Plus, putting more units on the market will put downward pressure on housing prices.

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

Peabody has largely complied with the letter of the Act. However, I believe we have not embraced the idea that we need to aggressively build new units and we have not adopted a long-term strategy to accomplish this.

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

We need to build social connections on the local level. These connections are going to be the invaluable foundation upon which to mount a successful civil resistance campaign against armed and violent reactionaries. Beyond that, the city government needs to make contingency plans now as to what the approach will be. I will push for tabletop exercises exploring different scenarios so that our city is prepared to fight back while also keeping essential services running.

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

I am against money in politics. As a public employee, I can neither ask anyone for money, receive money, ask someone else to ask someone for money, nor can I tell someone who they can talk to if they want to donate. I've been adhering to this restriction with the utmost diligence. It has forced me to be more creative, more grassroots, and less attentive to those with deep pockets. I believe all candidates should operate under those restrictions. If I can win while shunning traditional fundraising strategies, I believe we can be an example of how to do things differently.

### (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**
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.)*

You can learn more about our campaign at [PlanforPeabody.com](https://PlanforPeabody.com).

We have entered a Second Gilded Age. Working families are being exploited economically and we are in the golden age of political corruption. What's worse, the dangers to average people have grown more extreme as the federal government appears prepared to launch military occupations of American cities for nakedly political ends. Such times call for a response from all levels of government. Our cities and towns will need to find ways to resist while keeping services going.

But, If you made it this far, I also wanted to say: The work of progressives has never been more important than it has been today. I believe, and my faith remains unshaken, that progressive organizing, advocacy, and resistance to injustice are some of the very tools we are going to need to knock down the walls of injustice. Your efforts matter. You matter. And, you are not alone.

In solidarity,  
Tristan