



2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

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Office Sought: Mayor

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

- Housing
- Education
- Communicative, transparent, and responsive government

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

During my nearly four years as an At-Large City Councilor, I have proposed and passed more laws than any of my colleagues in order to support my community by expanding tenants rights, expanding rights for trans and polyamorous folks, revitalizing our wage theft committee, and creating safer streets for all. The passage of these bills has taught me how to navigate governmental processes, factor in implementation, and utilize the law to get results for my neighbors. As the only renter in this race and the only candidate not taking donations from for-profit developers, I know that working people in my community need these results urgently. That's why I am proposing the boldest platform to create permanently affordable housing by creating an Office of Social Housing, why I successfully pushed alongside councilors from Boston and Cambridge to end forced broker fees, and why as Mayor I will fight with greater authority to ensure Somerville is more affordable, accountable, and accessible for all.

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

I am inspired by the work that the Medford City Council has done to divest pension funds from fossil fuel companies, weapons manufacturers, and any entities engaged in perpetuating war crimes. I'd love to do the same in Somerville.

(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?

- a. Enforcing our Vacant Properties Ordinance. The City has had this law for several years and never enforced it, despite the fact that it can be used to fine negligent property owners daily if they do not comply.
- b. 3% community impact fee on short-term rentals. This is one I successfully pushed for and we should start to see approximately \$400,000 a year from it, 35% of which must go toward affordable housing by law. I'd like for half of it to while the other half would go to supporting our local artists.
- c. Social Consumption of Cannabis (aka cannabis cafes and events). The state legalized this activity nearly a decade ago, but has never licensed it. I publicly [lobbied](#) the Cannabis Control Commission to do more on this front and was grateful when they sent one of their commissioners to Somerville to discuss the matter with me. Now, the regulations are before the state and we are in a position to have the licensing authority by next year. I'd like to make Somerville the Amsterdam of New England, reaping both the social benefits as well as the additional commercial tax revenue.

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

I could spend the rest of this campaign writing a treatise responding to this question. Instead of doing that, here are a few of my priorities, given in no particular order, that balance the need to invest in services inside and outside of school hours:

- **Before-and-after school programming**

- My father was a former marine and a unionized pipefitter who worked on the Coronado Naval Base in San Diego. Each day, we would wake up early because he had to be at work early. When I was in the second grade, he would routinely drop me off at school at six in the morning before taking off to work and some day he would not pick me up until six in the evening. He was able to do that because my elementary school had robust before-and-after school programming. The fact that so many students in Somerville Public Schools (SPS) do not have the same opportunity that I had, which helped shape my education journey, is appalling to me. Although it will not be easy, I am committed to building the infrastructure to create these opportunities for our students.
 - **Utilizing school space for community events and wraparound services**
 - Our schools should be more than only spaces for the education of adolescents; they should be intentional civic spaces for the well-being of our whole community. I'd love to see the high school utilized in this way. Additionally, I support the demand of SEU to create community hub schools that provide wraparound services that can help mitigate existing inequities.
 - **Reducing student-to-educator ratios**
 - **Increasing City responsiveness to SPS needs and partnering with Somerville Educators Union**
 - For years, educators have utilized 311 to report substandard conditions in their buildings with slow to no response. To a certain extent, delays in response are inevitable given the amount of aging buildings, infrastructures, and emerging needs throughout the City. That said, I believe response times can be improved and that will be a focus of my tenure as mayor.
 - **Monitoring the amount of families opting to send their children to private or charter schools and working to bring that number down**
3. **What can your city do to help protect immigrant communities under attack from ICE and ensure genuine community safety?**

Let's start with what Somerville is already doing. We are a sanctuary city and our departments do not directly share information with or collaborate with ICE. We also have an ordinance in place that requires our police department to inform us twice a year about requests from ICE, if there were any transfers to ICE custody, and of any reimbursements from the federal government for operations in collaboration with ICE. Furthermore, the City has an Immigrant Legal Services Stabilization Fund that we use to support immigration cases for our residents. I happily voted to fund it when it was created. The City has been holding Know Your Rights training, but I think we should go beyond that, as well.

As mayor, I will mail every household in Somerville a Know Your Rights form in multiple languages. The form will include a detachable piece that can be slide under the door in case ICE shows up at a resident's home.

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. Green infrastructure for flood mitigation
- b. More green space and partnering with the MBTA to do bus shelters
- c. Electrifying our municipal fleet and buildings

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'm proud to have the most extensive legislative record on this issue of any candidate in this race as the lead sponsor of the Safe Streets Ordinance, which will require that Somerville build out 30 miles of protected bike lanes by 2030, increase accessibility of sidewalks and crosswalks using national standards, and maintain or expand accessible parking whenever possible. The Safe Streets Ordinance is the culmination of several meetings with our Mobility Department, Engineering Department, Department of Public Works, Union Square and East Somerville Main Streets, and local advocacy groups; all in an effort to craft language that was ambitious and feasible, with the goal of ending traffic deaths in our community.

I also changed local laws to make it possible for Somerville to mail tickets to people park illegally. As a cyclist, I know that having to swerve into the street because a vehicle is where it shouldn't be only makes our roads a more dangerous place.

Of course, not everyone can bike across the city, particularly in a municipality like Somerville that is geographically divided by so many hills. This division is made worse by the fact that there are essentially no North-to-South public transit routes in the city. That's why, taking a page out of Salem's book, I would like to initiate a North-South microtransit pilot that can bring connectivity to our city using shuttle buses.

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?

Like in many municipalities around this country, the cost of housing is the number one issue for most Somerville residents. As the only renter in this race, the only candidate who does not accept donations from for-profit developers, and the mayoral candidate endorsed by Somerville YIMBY, I will fight harder to ensure that the City of Somerville does everything in its power to bring housing stability home. Seven years ago, one year after I was displaced, Mayor Curtatone created the Office of Housing Stability to direct resources and support toward renters experiencing housing instability. It began with a single employee - the Director - whose role was to build the department and set direction for how we could support our neighbors facing displacement. As the only renter in this race and the only candidate who doesn't take donations from for-profit developers, I know that we must do more to build permanently affordable housing. That is why, as Mayor, I will create an Office of Social Housing with a single Director-level employee whose job will be to determine the legal and financial path to leveraging our municipal land, Housing Acquisition Fund, and partnerships with non-profits like the Community Land Trust to build out a department that can create permanently affordable housing owned by the City. Where the Office of Housing Stability will treat the symptoms of this issue, the Office of Social Housing will get to the root by creating decommodified housing.

Accessibility is a value that I have fought for years, including by successfully pushing the City to change our zoning so that variances that changes the means of egress for a building by making it more accessible (adding an elevator, for example) do not need to go through our Planning Board, if the City offers a waiver. I did this because I saw residents in my community be denied the ability to make their own homes accessible, which would decrease the scarcity of accessible housing in our city. My neighbors deserve the right to age in place without having government or procedure get in their way.

Once upon a time, Somerville had a first-time home buyer program similar to what Boston has. I'd like to explore bringing that program back.

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

As the densest city in New England, I think Somerville is leading on this front. However, we can still do more. As mayor, I will lead the effort to upzone throughout our city, particularly in areas where there is a significant percentage of single-family housing.

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

The motto on the City of Somerville seal is “municipal freedom gives national strength.” In times of tyranny, we must show this fact by standing up for our values and assert the inalienable truth that government exists as a tool to support the needs of everyday people, not the other way around. As mayor, I will take the Trump administration to court alongside municipalities throughout the Commonwealth and country whenever necessary. However, my experience as a community organizer for many years in the Greater Boston area gives me particular insights into how to channel grassroots energy effectively to challenge systems of power. As mayor, I will be Somerville’s Organizer-in-Chief and work with our community to demand that our tax dollars be used for community care, not the kidnapping of residents off our streets. We know that, for example, ICE is using websites like Canary Mission to target international students for their support of Palestine and Palestinians. As the candidate in this race endorsed by Somerville for Palestine, I’ve proven to my community that I will not buckle under pressure when it comes to fighting for the collective liberation of all people. It’s why, as mayor, I plan to create an LGBTQ Legal Stabilization Fund to help pay for gendered document changes for our trans neighbors who are under attack nationally. They shouldn’t have to pay hundreds of dollars out of pocket to be who they are and they deserve a government that will have their back.

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

I have been a champion of governmental transparency throughout my time on the council, from fighting to dismantle systems of surveillance such as ShotSpotter to ensuring that every one of my neighbors can easily learn how

our City spends its funds. When Somerville received nearly \$80 million in ARPA funds, initially, our mayor acted unilaterally to choose a series of projects that the City would spend money on. How was the city council and general public made aware about each allotment? Through press releases sent from our Communications Department. As such, in order to follow how much we spent and on what, someone would have to search for each release one at a time and then do the math themselves. I stood up for transparency by advocating that the City create a page that would visualize how much money had been spent, on what projects, and how much we had left. I'd like to implement similar initiatives to create more transparency about how the City utilizes other funding streams.

Insofar as accountability goes, I have always tried to be consistent in living my values. I'm honest about my viewpoints, I do what you say I will, and I attempt to maintain an open mind to the possibility that I could be wrong. Leadership requires growth and I will endeavor to lead with transparency, communication, and collaboration.

(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.)

I have not only supported several of the initiatives mentioned in the previous section, I have both led those efforts in Somerville or, in some cases, made them the law. For example:

- I have championed unarmed alternative emergency response programs during every budget cycle I have participated in as a councilor, only to have the Mayor's administration make excuses or flat-out reject the concept.
- I have also advocated for fare-free buses in Somerville
- The Safe Streets Ordinance that I passed is based around a priority network of proposed permanent bike lanes.

I hope to earn the support of Progressive Mass, as the leftist choice in this race.