

2023 Boston City Council Candidate Questionnaire

JP Progressives * Progressive West Roxbury/Roslindale * Allston/Brighton Progressives

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PUBLIC SECTION

The public part of the questionnaire contains a mix of yes/no and open-ended questions. Please keep all answers to open-ended questions to no more than 150 words. A non-response to a yes/no question will be treated as a no.

(A) Your Candidacy

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

1. Expanding Affordable Housing and Housing that is affordable. As someone that was raised in Boston Public Housing, I understand the importance of providing families with the opportunity to pay affordable rent to remain in the city. I also will prioritize transition of homeownership for families who are currently tenants, especially those with Section 8 vouchers.

2. Building a stronger public schools system. As an alumni of BPS from K-12, and someone that is planning on sending my two kids to public school, I want to work alongside the mayoral administration and BPS staff to provide teachers and students with the adequate resources required for a state of the art education. I want to highlight the importance of the arts, music, extra curricular activities, for the benefit of our children's development and understanding of life. I will bring more focus to the importance of vocational education and team up with labor unions to create an apprenticeship program for high school students to provide them with different opportunities, in case college is not the desired path.

3. Delivering top notch constituent services. One of the key responsibilities of a City Councilor is to ensure that residents have a reliable source of information and someone that will get the job done. As a former Director of Neighborhood Services, my office will prioritize getting back to all residents that need services from city departments and beyond.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

Public service is what I am passionate about. From a young age, I have focused my line of work alongside in the field of constituent services and working closely with community groups/residents to build stronger relationships between the people and local government.

I've had the privilege of working with multiple elected officials (Tito Jackson, Joe Kennedy III, Mayor Walsh, and Mayor Wu) and I've been able to see first hand what has worked and what has not worked. I have used my experience from working with them and have identified what works for me.

I am also ready to be a champion for progressive policy. During my time as Community Engagement Coordinator for Transportation for Massachusetts under the leadership of Chris Dempsey, I was co-chair of the Transit is Essential Coalition. We were successful in stopping the MBTA from cutting services during COVID and we also testified at the State House to advocate in favor of the Tobin Bridge Bus Lane Project.

I want to give back to the city that raised me. I want to be part of the progress of this city and ensure that my kids are raised with better resources than what I had. Too much is at stake to not give back.

3. What do you see as the role of the City Council in our strong-mayor system?

A City Council has many responsibilities:

1. To hold the Mayor accountable to advocate for the right policies and push forward a budget that is the most beneficial to the residents our City.

2. To be a source of information and resources to the residents. The Mayor is one person and does not have the flexibility to be in every neighborhood. Is the job of the City Councilor to be present, on the ground with the people fighting for what is best for the district.

3. To collaborate with other City Councilors on the various task force to push forward policy that will lead to positive change in our city.

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

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5. Which of the following groups have you chosen to reject / would reject campaign contributions from?

- a. For-profit developers
- b. Fossil fuel executives or lobbyists
- c. Charter school advocates and lobbyists
- d. Police unions

(B) Racial Equity & Community Engagement

1. Name three accomplishments you've been able to achieve to advance racial justice or equity.

1. As Chair of the Young Democrats of Massachusetts Latino Caucus, we partnered with local advocacy groups to draft a letter ""Mobility is Freedom! We are immigrants. We are Black."" and send it to the Governor and testify at the State House in favor of giving drivers license to undocumented individuals.

2. As volunteer for the FUNDOARCU (a Boston Based Dominican Non-Profits) I hosted classes to help permanent residents become US Citizens and also teach them English, so that they can apply to jobs and help build their resumes.

3. During my time at Transportation for Massachusetts, I was Co-Chair of the Regional Transit Agency Advocacy Coalition (RTAAC) where we worked organization like Livable Streets to push state legislators to increase the state's regional transit budget, a system in which minorities depend on the system the most. We focused in neighborhoods like Worcester, Brockton, and Lowell, and were successful in decreasing the price of local buses.

2. What steps would you take, if elected, to engage all the diverse communities of Boston in policymaking, and what past actions of yours should give voters confidence that you will follow through?

My passion is community engagement, and that is the step I will take to engage all communities in Boston in policymaking. By being present in the community, you build trust. I believe that it is extremely important to work with trusted community leaders to build a connection with residents that would not usually participate in policymaking.

As Director of Neighborhood Services, I made it a priority to personally call community leaders to put together meetings to go over policy that will impact them. An example of this is when the city was getting ready to start the Mildred Hailey Redevelopment project, I was tasked with calling the local tenant task force leader and bringing together current tenants to go over the impact and make them part of the process to understand the future of the development.

3. The future of democracy depends on robust youth engagement. Describe how you engage youth formally in your work as city councilor, or would plan to do so if elected.

I strongly believe in the use of Youth Councils and having them be part of policy decision making and helping them navigate city services. I currently volunteer as a Board Member on the United Nations of Greater Boston and help organize Model United Nation Forums and teach youth the importance of global conflicts and international relationships. I would want to do something similar as a councilor, but focus on local issues.

(C) Budget & Revenue

1. Do you support dedicating at least 1% of the operating budget to participatory budgeting?

YES. I believe that the residents of Boston deserve the opportunity to decide where a percentage of the budget is dedicated to. It is good for democracy and good for the future.

2. In 2022, almost 75% of Boston's revenue came from property taxes, but half Boston's land is tax exempt. To address this problem, then Mayor Menino created the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program, requesting large nonprofit hospitals, educational, and cultural institutions with over \$15 Million in property to pay 25% of their assessed potential property tax to reimburse the city for vital services, snow removal, fire and police protection, and sanitation. Half of that assessment can be fulfilled through provision of a community benefit. Each year fewer institutions pay their

full PILOT request, and in the last 12 years, institutions have failed to pay the city over \$175 Million in PILOT requests. How will you work to create a stronger PILOT system that expands community engagement, defines community benefits and creates a fairer system to meet the needs of residents of the city of Boston?

First, we need to update land valuations. Second, we should consider removing cultural institutions from the program because they've been hit so hard by COVID. Third, we need to work with institutions to define community benefits more specifically and align them to admin priorities - ie housing, schools, climate and economic opportunity- so that they don't get to claim random items as community benefits.

3. Given state law, Boston is limited in its taxing power. What opportunities do you see for the city to raise revenue?

Boston needs to ensure that its hospitals and universities are contributing their fair share through PILOT payments, advocate for matching funding from the state for the Community Preservation Act, and advocate to the state for funding sources such as the real estate transfer tax and vacancy fee.

(D) Education

1. What are your top priorities for reducing persistent racial and economic achievement gaps in the Boston Public Schools?

Affordable and accessible Child Care. At the moment, daycare is too expensive for families in the city. Low-income families do not have the luxury to maintain a well paying job and afford childcare. By making childcare more affordable, we are helping families build more capital and allow them to focus on other necessary expenses.

Vocational Education. Not every student wants to go to college. We need to help students pursue different paths that will lead them well paying jobs and help them become experts in different fields in the union trades. Not only will this reduce achievement gaps in BPS, but also make the building trades more diverse.

2. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools in Boston?

YES.

- 3. Last year, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education actively considered a takeover of the Boston Public Schools. Do you oppose any such future efforts at state takeover of BPS?**

YES.

- 4. Do you support a change in BPS governance to allow Boston voters the right to elect school committee members, like every other city in Massachusetts? If so, what would your ideal structure be? If not, why not?**

YES. The structure would consist of elected members for democratic accountability and additional appointed members to ensure representation of Boston's diversity and expertise.

- 5. The Boston Public Schools district is working on a memorandum of understanding with the Boston Police Department that avoids placing police back in schools but clarifies when educators should call police to respond to incidents. What are your thoughts about such a proposal? Moreover, what would be your priorities in ensuring that BPS is a safe environment for all students to learn?**

I want to ensure that students have a safe environment to learn. This starts by building trust between teachers/school leadership and students. This will build a better communication system that will lead to transparency and partnership. Schools should also implement a monitor system. When I was at the O'Bryant, there was a staff member on each floor to ensure that no student was wandering in the hall ways. This let the students know that their actions were being watched at all times, which led to less/no violence.

- 6. What steps would you take to make universal pre-K a reality in Boston?**

As City Councilor, I would advocate to shift a portion of BPS budget towards eliminating any cost barriers for families with financial hardship. Every single family in the city deserves an equal opportunity to receive an early education. Our enrollment process needs to become easy and accessible, by creating step by step landing page so that families can easily navigate the system.

Most importantly, we need to ensure that our schools have Pre-K teachers that feel supported and have adequate resources to provide state of the art service. Our turnover rate of teachers has increased exponentially in BPS. We need to reevaluate our teachers benefits and make them feel invested into our schools.

(E) Public Safety

- 1. Do you support closing the loopholes in Boston's Trust Act which allow BPD to inquire about immigration status or pass information along to ICE?**

YES.

- 2. Do you support shuttering the Boston Police gang database?**

YES.

- 3. Although the Boston City Council is not directly involved in negotiations over the Boston Police Patrolman's Association (BPPA) contract, the City Council does have influence by way of a final vote. What reforms, if any, would you like to see in a final contract? What, if anything, would make you vote against it?**

I would like to see reforms in transparency and public accountability. At the moment, there is a great concern of transparency from the Police Union on how they handle business. There also need to be changes to the contracts to enable a transition to a public health approach to public safety, so that people experiencing homelessness, substance use disorder, or mental health crises can be met with service providers and care.

- 4. Would you support allowing the use of civilians to direct traffic around construction projects and street work as opposed to limiting such work to the Boston Police Department?**

YES.

- 5. Would you advocate for the reallocation of money from the Boston Police Department budget to reinvestment in communities?**

YES.

- 6. Do you believe that affiliation or sympathies with white supremacist organizations among officers is a problem with BPD? If so, what measures would you take to combat that issue?**

YES. I believe that anyone affiliated with a white supremacist organization should be terminated. The beauty of this city is its diversity, and we will not applaud anyone that is working against that.

7. Do you support the legalization of overdose prevention centers?

YES. I've publicly led on and advocated for this.

8. How would you evaluate the City's response to the humanitarian situation at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard ("Mass & Cass")?

The situation at Mass and Cass is inhumane. As City leaders, we need to do a better job of working with our state partners to come up with a response that is more humane and more committed to providing the individuals with more treatment, with meaningful follow up. We need to invest more money on the City Budget and State budget to assist with recovery centers, safe injection sites, and social workers.

9. What would be your priorities in reducing gun violence in the city?

I believe that in order to reduce gun violence in Boston, we can't go back to the enforcement-first playbook of the past, we have to break the cycle of trauma that's driving it. While working for former City Councilor Tito Jackson, we conducted research that found that the most effective way to reduce gun violence is by funding community violence intervention (CVI). These programs actually address the cycle of intergenerational poverty, violence, and trauma that drives gun violence.

I want to be a champion for this effort and work closely with Community Service Officers of BPD, faith leaders, youth advocates to build a sense of trust in our communities and begin to have these conversations. We cannot continue to install fear through enforcement, it will only create more trauma.

(F) Environment & Transportation

1. What steps would you take to reduce dependence on cars and better facilitate the ability of Bostonians to get around by walking, biking, or public transit?

Boston is heavily car dependent, caused by a failing public transportation system and lack of transit friendly development. Residents also feel unsafe walking or riding bikes on our main streets due to lack of protected infrastructure. As City Councilor, I would work closely with our Mayor and the Boston Transportation Department to review the current street safety plans and help advocate for more traffic calming measures. My first priority is to work on the safety of Hyde Park Ave. There have been far too many accidents caused by blind spots of turning cars or speeding vehicles due to lack of safety infrastructure.

We also need to focus building housing near our public transit. I was a loud supporter of the project next to Mattapan Square Station because it provides residents of this district housing that gives them access to transportation and a main streets district that takes away the necessity to own a car.

2. What are your top three policy priorities for making Boston a climate-resilient city, and how would you ensure that equity is at the center of any such efforts?

1. Eliminating dependency on oil/gas: I led the charge during my time at Neighborhood Services to implement electric chargers at the Hyde Park municipal lot, and held Eversource accountable when the equipment was not being delivered on time. Through my advocacy, we were able to expedite the shipping of the equipment and those chargers are being installed this summer.

2. Protecting our Tree Canopy: District 5 is known for having the greatest tree canopy in the city, and I believe that it is of great importance to maintain this reputation and help keep our air clean and protect our shadows. I want to be a champion to protect Sherrin Woods and encourage the city to purchase the parcel.

3. Net zero building requirements: As development continues to happen in our city and renewable sources of energy are added to these buildings, they are capable of producing enough energy to meet or exceed their requirements to run. Net zero building requirements lead to Reduced energy costs, Increased comfort for occupants, Positive environmental impact, Reliable and affordable operations, and improved energy security.

3. Do you oppose the creation of new fossil fuel infrastructure in Boston?

YES.

4. Do you support expanding the fare-free bus pilots and making fare-free buses permanent in Boston? What steps would you take to achieve this goal?

YES. By making buses like the 28 free, we have increased usage and we are also helping families save money. We need to continue partnering with our state colleagues to push this initiative even further. In District 5, I will advocate to make the #32 bus free, as it is the main bus that runs down Hyde Park Ave, and by doing so will bring down congestion of cars during rush hours. I would start by teaming up with organizations like Livable Streets and Transit Matters to build a coalition and highlight the importance of fare free bus pilots.

5. Do you support the expansion of the City's curbside composting pickup program?

YES. Not only would I support the expansion of compost pick up, but I would want to focus on the education piece as well. Households like my parents and other relatives don't understand the meaning behind compost and its benefits. I would make it a priority to speak about it at neighborhood gatherings and during 1:1 conversations.

(G) Housing

1. How would you expand affordable housing in Boston and ensure development without displacement?

I support the expansion of affordable housing, but want to focus on two things 1) building more 30% - 40% AMI units so that low-income families can actually afford to pay rent. 2) Increase the minimum requirement of affordable units from 12% to 30%.

I also admire what the administration was able to accomplish in neighborhoods like East Boston, where we purchased units to make sure they remained affordable for generations to come. I believe that this initiative is possible in all neighborhoods of Boston, and it allows us to use housing that already exist.

We also need to take a look at the zoning of each neighborhood. I believe that in District 5, we have a unique opportunity because all three neighborhoods have a business district with the potential to build upwards.

2. What opportunities do you see for leveraging city-owned land for expanding affordable housing?

We have a great opportunity in Boston because of the municipal buildings that we own. As we continue to redevelop those buildings, we need to consider making those buildings into mixed-used developments that include

affordable housing. In this District in particular, we also have the unique opportunity of purchasing vacant parcels and patterning with local organizations to build affordable housing alongside our main streets district. In Mattapan in particular, the business alongside Blue Hill Ave are 1 story buildings. I believe we have a unique opportunity there to 1) Help those business owners develop their businesses. 2) Build upwards so that there are units above the businesses, which will essentially lead to not only more affordable housing, but also more foot traffic for the corridor.

3. Do you support the City of Boston's Home Rule Petition to establish a small transfer fee on real estate transactions over \$2 million? If so, how do you plan to advocate for it at the State House?

YES. I will partner with my colleagues at the State House and local organizations that work diligently on housing advocacy such as City Life, and testify at the State House hearings to highlight the importance of this transfer fee and how impactful this can be for the housing efforts in our city, and potentially our state.

4. Do you support rent stabilization? Do you believe that the City of Boston's current Home Rule Petition goes far enough, doesn't go far enough, or goes too far -- and why?

YES. The current Home Rule Petition was a good step towards progress, but we can be more aggressive. One major piece that I would want to change is the required IDP units. I believe that we need to increase the percentage (%) of required IDP units to at least 25%. As the cost of rent continues to increase, the quicker our families continue to be priced out. We need to be more aggressive with our approach to protect those very families that want to remain in Boston.

5. Would you support a Tenant Opportunity to Purchase ordinance, enabling tenants to purchase a building if the owner seeks to put it on the market?

YES.

6. Boston's inclusionary development policy (IDP) requires that 13 percent of the units in a building need to be affordable, and the City is currently considering increasing it to 20%. Do you support such an increase?

YES. I actually believe it should be higher than 20%, closer to 25% or even 30%.

- 7. Do you support requiring that a majority of new affordable units be built on-site, in order to ensure communities are diverse and integrated?**

YES.

- 8. Across the city, there are projects for large-scale supportive housing that are being fought by local communities, such as the Shattuck project in Jamaica Plain, the Comfort Inn development project in Dorchester, Charlestown's Constitution Inn project, and more. Do you support pushing forward with these specific projects and others like them?**

YES. The opioid epidemic that we are witnessing in Boston is out of control. Individuals that want to become better and receive support deserve a state of the art institution to receive those services. Who are we to say that we do not want supportive housing in our neighborhoods, but claim to be a sanctuary city. We need to support any effort that will help others become healthier.

(H) Economic Opportunity

- 1. What steps would you propose to reduce Boston's income and wealth inequality, especially the racial wealth gap?**

The average net-worth of a Dominican family in Boston is \$0.00, as reported by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. Most of this is caused by the lack of non-white families owning any liquid asset. I believe that financial education needs to be taught at a young age, which is why I want to propose a financial literature class for all high school seniors to make them aware of their options.

I also believe that we need to create a pipeline for tenants of BHA or any subsidized housing to homeownership. Home-ownership leads to generational wealth, and creates a backbone for any family because a house is a major asset.

There should also be emphasis on the planning of neighborhoods with predominantly families of color. When you have neighborhoods with reliable public transit, a strong main streets district, health centers, libraries, community center, etc, families become less car dependent and it allows them to feel less pressure to drive elsewhere. Roslindale is a good example of a 15 minute neighborhood, and I believe that all neighborhoods in Boston have the potential of becoming that.

2. Do you support requiring city contractors to give their employees at least two weeks' notice before changing their schedules and to compensate workers for late schedule changes?

YES. Absolutely, workers of any industry deserve transparency before their personal lives are impacted. It leads to a stronger work environment.

3. What steps can the Council take to achieve greater diversity in City contracting?

City contracting starts at procurement. As a City Council, I would request a review of all City contracts at the Procurement office and review contracts across all departments. I believe that 20% of all City Contracts should go to Minority Businesses. However, I do believe we are failing our youth of diverse communities because we are not emphasizing enough the benefits of a vocational education or career path. Our labor unions and building trades continue to have a predominant white work force because we are not creating a pipeline for youth in BPS to explore something other than college and eventually receive a contract from the City.

4. The cannabis industry is expected to grow in Boston in the coming years. What steps should the City take to make sure that it grows in an equitable way, in which the communities most impacted by the drug war are able to benefit?

We are at a time in the cannabis industry that it is early enough to make it equitable for communities that have been impacted the most. I am a huge supporter and advocate of the Boston Equity Program provided by the Boston Cannabis Board. This program allows for minority applicants to have support in the application process and technical assistance. I think that we should take a step further and provide minority applicants with financial education as well, because that's the biggest piece in opening up a cannabis business.

(I) Democracy

1. How can Boston increase turnout in municipal elections?

We should consider making election days a holiday. Far too many families do not have the time to go vote due to work requirements.

I also believe that the City should have a budget to advertise better during election season.

2. Do you support allowing non-citizens with legal status the right to vote in municipal elections?

YES.

3. Do you support allowing 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote in municipal elections?

YES. Absolutely. By allowing 16 -17 year to vote in municipal elections, we are encouraging activity in democracy and it will also increase civic education in schools.

4. Would you support Charter Change to allow for Ranked Choice Voting in Boston?

YES.

5. Do you support making hybrid access to public meetings permanent?

YES.

(J) Additional Comments

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

Change can and will happen when you have a progressive champion who will not only advocate for the policies that will lead to change, but also someone who is ready to put their boots on the ground and work with the very people that need the help. I am ready and committed to be that champion, and believe that my experience has proven that. I believe that District 5 can be a model to follow for the rest of the City because it is where the backbone of our City workers live. This is where our families live. I am ready to serve you all at City Hall and in our communities by showing up, engaging, and working together.