

# 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?

Completing the first ever municipal food waste ban, the first ever for Boston Tree Canopy Protection, and successfully constructing the first community health center in Hyde Park

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

I was a Public Defender prior to becoming the Councilor for District 5 and it was with that perspective and lens that I dedicated myself to advancing racial, economic, environmental, and social justice at the municipal level. I am proud of the work we have advanced and that we continue to move towards the finish line.

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

Often the Council is a body that is able to advance more progressive and more surgical policy. It is also an excellent podium to express the needs of the city, the district, and our most marginalized communities.

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

There are several but I believe congestion pricing or vacancy taxes are both very strong choices for Boston.

**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.**

Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis, Securing millions for Hyde Park's first ever community health center, and successfully advocating for, and as Chair of Government Operations, passing the rent stabilization proposal at the municipal level. I've also as Chair advanced the Reparations Task Force and am an original sponsor of the Office of Police Accountability and Transparency.

**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 office routinely follows the lead of community in elevating and refining policy. Whether it's through advocacy for participatory budgeting, redistricting, the food waste ban, or the tree ordinance. My office and I routinely engage with key stakeholders because we truly believe it makes for better policy and better results.

**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.**

As Chair I led passage of the HRP to allow 16-17 year old's the right to vote. As Chair I also continue to ensure youth have a voice at the table on some of the most important work we've advanced such as the Reparations Task Force, The Office of Police Accountability and Transparency, and the elected School Committee. All of which included a seat for youth in codified form.

### **(C) Budget & Revenue**

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

YES. I am a strong advocate for Participatory Budgeting and intend to continue to seek ways to strengthen the process.

**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?**

I will continue to follow the lead of advocates who have been pushing for stronger PILOT commitments because I know that this money can be transformational.

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

I believe it's worth reconsidering free parking permits, I believe in a vacancy tax, and would also look into the Congestion Pricing policies that have worked in other cities.

### **(D) Education**

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

Continuing to advocate for serious investment into our schools while honing in especially on bilingual education and ESL learners who deserve a system that prioritizes their needs after decades of UNZ.

**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. Fully elected is my ideal structure but I would support a hybrid with majority or two thirds elected if that would get us to the finish line.

**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 am the original sponsor of the police surveillance oversight ordinance that created protections for our children and addressed the school to prison and school to deportation pipeline. I oppose policing in schools but do believe that schools and BPD could benefit from an MOU that clearly defines policy.

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

Universal pre-k is overdue and I believe integral to the future success of our Boston Public Schools and Boston children. I will continue to advocate for funding and try to find ways to create revenue for this.

## **(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?**

We need better accountability measures. Officers who are fired return at an almost 75% rate: reforms there and in overtime costs and disciplinary measures as well as civilianizing many roles including opening details to civilians are all important.

- 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. I have a proven track record of doing this.

- 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. Officers should have a social media policy that allows for termination for individuals who use their platforms to advance white supremacy. We should implement a zero tolerance policy.

- 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")?**

We need to continue to increase our transitional housing stock so that individuals are able to receive the necessary care they need. The current situation is not tenable.

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

I've advocated for starting a nonfatal shooting taskforce at BPD so that we can solve more nonfatal shootings which is proven to lower homicide rates. I also have advocated for more youth jobs and programming. I also believe we need to increase our resources to properly address mental health in the city.

**(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?**

I support bus and bike lanes and engineering solutions to pedestrian safety and have secured resources for them. I believe congestion pricing can help with this, I also believe and have advocated for a stronger MBTA system because having a functional public transit system is integral to lessening the dependence of cars.

**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?**

Passing the Tree Canopy Protection Ordinance, continuing to pass and enforce legislation like BERDO 2.0 and the stretch municipal code, and strengthening our waterfront protections to address climate change and sea level rise.

**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. Continuing to fund this past the pilot program and advocating with the state and MBTA to grow the policy.

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

YES.

## **(G) Housing**

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

I support and advocate in my district for 20% affordable housing units as a requirement. I support raising IDP and ensuring that while we continue to build we do so in a way that allows for truly affordable housing. I support increasing density or lessening parking requirements to achieve those goals.

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

I believe we should be facilitating the construction of affordable housing by easing the process to build projects over 50% affordable and making city land available for that purpose.

- 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 have used and will continue to use my podium to advocate for this.

- 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. Ideally it would have a much lower cap. The HRP that was passed was a compromise to give it the best change of passage at the State House. I support a statewide ballot initiative to resolve this issue if the State Legislature refuses to act.

- 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.

- 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.

## **(H) Economic Opportunity**

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

Creating and strengthening programs for homeownership as property ownership is a key factor towards creating generational wealth. Continuing to make key investments into Public Schools which are majority people of color and a pathway to advancement. Ensuring our small businesses which are largely owned by BIPOC are supported and finally diversifying the recipients of city contracts so that when we use city funds we are also alleviating this issue.

- 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.

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

Continuing to break down contracts so that we can use them as vehicles of change. In other words contracts that allow companies to grow with them and are not so large that they bar entry.

**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?**

As a Councilor I am proud of my record supporting equity applicants in District 5 and I will continue to push for equity applicants and those most impacted to benefit from and grow in this industry.

**(I) Democracy**

**1. How can Boston increase turnout in municipal elections?**

Voter education and engagement. I believe it is also the responsibility of candidates to play a role in this as well. Civic education as a mandatory element in BPS can help grow our engagement early.

**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.

**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.)*