



2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

Bay Staters currently face three crises - housing, climate, and wage price crises. If I am elected, I will work to prepare Salem residents for the future by tackling these three issues.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

From my first job in government as a constituent services intern in Congressman Tonko's district office, my entire career has been working either in or with the government. I spent two years as a Congressional staffer on the House Armed Services Committee before moving to the Association for Commuter Transportation as the Government Affairs Manager. When the opportunity to pursue my passion, climate change and environmental resilience as the Advocacy Program Manager for the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA) arose, I didn't think twice, and since moving to IRWA I have also served as a Policy Advisor for Seaside Sustainability, as well as serving on Salem's Sustainability, Energy and Resilience Committee.

As a career public policy professional, I know what good government looks like - and what it doesn't. Now I want to take that knowledge to Salem City Hall to serve the residents of Ward 5.

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

I would like to adopt Somerville's sanctuary city ordinance, as it is the only community in Massachusetts that has an ordinance that prevents ICE from coming into the city.

(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?

In Salem, the commercial tax base in Salem is only 6%. Most of the revenue is property, hotel and restaurant tax. I want to work with city staff to increase the commercial tax base by developing more housing. I will also work with city staff and Crowley and others to ensure that the wind terminal project goes forward.

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

In Salem, debt-exclusion will be on the ballot next year to build a new \$450 million high school. I am very supportive of this because if the city votes yes we receive roughly 50% of this from the state, however if the city votes this down we will still need to build a \$350 million (which will be closer to \$1 billion after inflation and interest) new high school but with no state money. Ensuring that the vote goes favorably is not just important for Salem's financial interests, it is important for Salem's students as well to receive the best education they possibly can.

The second issue I would want to tackle is the state funding formula, which treats Salem as if we're an affluent community even though we are an EJ and gateway city community. If elected, I will work with Rep. Cruz and Senator Lovely to fix this formula.

Finally, 50% of students in the district experience some level of food insecurity, and under COVID when they could not come to school many of them did not get the meal that they get which for many of these kids is the only meal that they get. The city lost a federal grant for \$900,000 for food security, the summer meals program was taken away and the city is now footing the bill for

this year. I want to get that money back from the state. Every study tells us that kids need to be healthy in order to learn and reach their full potential, but beyond that basic human decency tells us that no child should go hungry.

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

As a second-generation Colombian I worry about my own family's safety (and, to a certain extent, my own) on a daily basis. Every time somebody is disappeared off of the streets, that is someone's family member, and the stress that my own community is going through is unconscionable. If elected, I will work with my colleagues on the Council to build on Salem's 2017 Sanctuary City Ordinance, which currently only mandates that public employees will not ask people for their immigration status. I would like to see the ordinance improved by adding language instructing the city not to provide information to ICE, which is currently not prohibited.

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?

My three policy priorities for making Salem climate-resilient are as follows;

1. Introduce an ordinance authorizing Salem's Sustainability, Energy, and Resilience Committee to make development review and recommendation to the Planning Board, something currently only the Design Review Board can do.
2. Expand the specialized code to apply retrofits over a certain size, as currently specialized code only applies to new construction.
3. Salem was one of the 19 cities to becoming a Climate Leader Community, and I will work with our sustainability and resilience department to ensure that money is focused on our EJ areas, two of which being The Point and behind Pioneer Terrace.

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?

As the former Government Affairs Manager for the Association for Commuter Transportation, I recognize that our transportation infrastructure was first and foremost designed to move cars, not people. It is for this reason that I am committed to concepts and policies like Complete Streets and Parking Benefit

Districts, and fully support the traffic calming measures being taken along Lafayette Street to build pedestrian and protect bike infrastructure.

In 2022, Salem passed the Green Building Ordinance, a great first step in green infrastructure. However, it only applies to municipal properties, and I would like to put in front of the council a revised Green Building Ordinance that would apply to EV charging and bike parking to non-municipal properties as well.

Finally, I intend to work with the city transportation/police department to have a continuous bike network, so that cyclists can commute throughout the entirety of Salem from one bordering city or town to another in complete safety.

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?

Salem is a For All Ages community, and I want to build on some of these initiatives such as universal design. I also believe that the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance that can be more aggressive than it currently is to increase the percentage of affordable housing. With most public housing being built in the 1950s and very little money and funding to maintain these buildings today, many people living in public housing are living unsafe/unhealthy conditions. When it is time, I support Pioneer Terrace being converted to a public/private partnership like Leefort Terrace which has increased the amount of public housing from 52 to 124 units, all project based vouchers

Additionally, I am very supportive of the Lifebridge/Harborlight partnership expansion because I believe in increasing supportive services and having more permanent housing units for previously unhoused people.

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

So far it has worked great there have been no issues. However, we are building a new MBTA train station, half of which will be in my ward. When this happens, I would like to move the MBTA Communities Act to be around that train stop because, unlike the current radius which already has enough housing to meet the requirement, the area around the new train stop does not. This will increase the ability for the development of workforce and transit housing as this train stop is walking distance from both the hospital and the university, the two biggest employers in Salem and both deficient in employees.

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

I would like to make Uplift Salem, the city's UBI pilot program for 100 residents, permanent and increase the number of residents eligible significantly.

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

As someone whose first job in government was constituent services, it was impressed on me the importance of meeting people where they are. This means being always available, having regular meet and greets, and hosting town hall style meetings with the Councillors from Ward 1 and Ward 7.

(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 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.)

Regarding question 1 of the yes/no policy questions - I strongly oppose the expansion of charter schools. This has been an issue I've protested since I was a middle schooler and attended demonstrations in front of the Governor's Mansion in Albany. Last year the Salem Academy Charter School applied for an expansion of 140 seats which would have cost the district \$1.2 million. Under the state rules charter schools can only apply for an expansion if the district is underperforming. Our district came in number one of all the gateway cities and for most categories we outperform the charter schools. They would not be able to apply for an expansion in 2025, and I do not support any carveouts or exceptions for them to be able to do so.

Regarding question 4 of the yes/no policy questions, I am absolutely in favor of fare-free public transit especially for residents. It is an economic driver, and I would like the developer to pay for free transportation services as part of the Shetland Park Development.

Regarding question 7 of the yes/no policy questions, I support the legislation before the State Legislature that would limit rent increases to 5%. If passed, I will work with my colleagues to pass rent stabilization here in Salem as soon as possible.