

Progressive Newton 2017 Municipal Candidates' Questionnaire

(Please submit answers to ProgressiveNewt@gmail.com by Friday, August 18; answers will be available to the public)

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS SPECIFICALLY AS POSSIBLE:

1. How will you approach collective bargaining with public unions and how will you weigh the value of well-paid, skilled union labor against potential cost savings from outsourcing?

I fully support the right of workers to bargain collectively. Additionally, I believe that all workers should have access to fair wages, safe working conditions, and good benefits.

I'm particularly proud that our family business, Grossman Marketing Group, has had a union shop since 1952 and has never had a strike, a lockout, or even a single matter go to arbitration. The union members and the business management team have worked together in a constructive and collaborative process to achieve business stability even in challenging economic times. This is the type of team approach I hope to bring to Newton.

2. What value do you place on increasing affordable housing in Newton, and what concrete steps will you take to expand affordable housing?

Expanding opportunities for affordable housing in Newton is vital to ensure that Newton remains a diverse, inclusive, and accessible community for people of all ages, backgrounds, and economic means, including our seniors, working families, and young professionals. To achieve this goal, I will support appropriate transit-oriented, mixed-use projects that enhance our village centers and grow Newton's tax base. By working collaboratively and emphasizing the importance of long-term planning, we can ensure Newton grows responsibly and thoughtfully.

3. Do you support the welcoming city ordinance? What other steps will you take to make our city welcoming to all, regardless of race, class, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other discrete characteristics?

One of the proudest moments I've had as a parent was bringing my children to the steps of City Hall to rally in support of Newton's Welcoming City Ordinance. Together as a family, we held up homemade signs and stood with friends and neighbors in support of the idea that Newton is and will always remain an open and welcoming city. The Welcoming City Ordinance was a critical first step in establishing policy to ensure this.

4. What concrete steps will you take to combat global climate change, increase renewable energy, and decrease energy consumption in Newton?

Newton must continue to improve in finding ways to take care of our planet and preserve it for future generations. I will support these efforts by advocating for the following: (1) diverting reusable material from our waste stream, including exploring opportunities to pilot an opt-in composting program; (2) repairing and improving our roads to increase safety and access for pedestrians and bikers; (3) investing in the repair of our water, sewer and stormwater systems to address leaks and wasted resources that result from those leaks; (4) implementing recycling

at large-scale city events, such as the 4th of July fireworks, Marathon, road races, etc.; and (5) converting Newton's fleet of non-emergency vehicles to hybrid and/or electric vehicles.

In addition to these ideas, I will continually seek and evaluate common-sense solutions to reduce our city's environmental footprint and educate our residents and kids as to how we can all work together to save our planet.

5. What does Black Lives Matter mean to you?

The past few years, and especially the past few weeks of current events in our country have underscored the reality that we face deep-seated racism in the United States. I am deeply saddened that this remains the case in 2017. Black Lives Matter means to me that we will not ever tolerate hatred and bigotry in our community or our country. It means that no person should fear for his or her safety when pulled over for a routine traffic stop. It means that no person should be made to feel that he or she is any less than anyone else because of the color of his or her skin. And it means that we must be honest about our own biases and privileges that still pervade society, and work towards leveling the playing field and offering equal opportunities for success and prosperity for all.

6. Would you support a zero-tolerance policy for discriminatory language by city employees?

Yes, absolutely. Discriminatory language has no place in our city government.

7. What concrete steps will you take to address income inequality in Newton?

I will work to address income inequality in Newton through efforts to improve our affordable housing stock, expand employment opportunities, and invest in our public schools. As mentioned above, I support expanding opportunities for affordable housing in Newton to ensure that Newton remains a diverse, inclusive, and accessible community for people of all ages, backgrounds, and economic means.

These efforts also work in tandem with expanding employment opportunities. We know that one of the biggest barriers to attracting companies to locate in Newton is the ability for those companies to hire here, given how cost-prohibitive it can be for working families and young professionals to live in Newton. We also know that adding appropriately-sized mixed-use development to our village centers increases the vitality of those centers and supports local businesses. Additionally, we must also work with our new mayor on zoning reform so we can provide greater clarity to potential employers as to where they can set up shop. This will invite companies and small businesses to locate here and do so without putting them through a lengthy, expensive, and uncertain process.

Finally, we must continue to invest in our schools, including working through the pipeline of school buildings that are badly in need of rebuilding or repair, to ensure that we are offering all of Newton's families a first-rate education regardless of background or socioeconomic status. This also includes investing in full-day kindergarten and access to pre-K programming, as we know that the achievement gap begins in the early years.

8. Under what circumstances would you support an override?

An override is but one tool in the financial toolkit for the city that should be carefully evaluated before asking our taxpayers to contribute even more than they do today. Other tools I would look to in order to generate revenue include bolstering our commercial tax base, seeking opportunities for public-private partnerships where appropriate, and maximizing Newton's chance to benefit from available federal and state aid, such as the proposed Millionaire's Tax that will be on our next statewide ballot to support local investment in education and transportation.

In order to consider supporting an override for Newton, I would first want to give our new mayor the chance to fully and carefully analyze the city's finances and make a determination as to where we can shave expenses from our current spending and generate revenue from other sources. At that point, I would seek to achieve a level of confidence that we've put our existing tax dollars to use in the most efficient, effective, and advantageous way to Newton taxpayers. If we then still face significant financial shortfalls required to stay on track with the infrastructure investments that our community wants, demands, and deserves, I would consider an override. To the extent possible, I would also want to explore ways to offer means-tested tax relief to those Newton taxpayers for whom it would be a substantial hardship to contribute more in taxes.

9. What steps would you take to assist seniors, millennials, and others who might be cost-burdened? HUD defines cost-burdened as paying more than 30% of their income for housing.

As mentioned above, I believe that expanding opportunities for affordable housing in Newton is vital to ensure that Newton remains a diverse, inclusive, and accessible community for people of all ages, backgrounds, and economic means, including our seniors, working families, and young professionals. To achieve this goal, I will support appropriate transit-oriented, mixed-use projects that enhance our village centers and grow Newton's tax base. By working collaboratively and emphasizing the importance of long-term planning, we can ensure Newton grows responsibly while assisting those that are cost-burdened.

10. How would you improve access to transportation? What do you see as Newton's role in advocating for expanded transportation?

Expanding access to transportation is vital for many reasons, including closing the socioeconomic gap, reducing our carbon footprint, and improving the quality of life for all Newtonians – especially our senior community. I would work with our state leaders to advocate for investment in transportation, including our MBTA and commuter rail stations, at every possible turn.

I would also advocate for expanded transportation by looking for creative solutions, such as bike sharing, utilizing ride-sharing technology, and evaluating shuttle service where possible. I would also advocate for investment in repairing our roads and sidewalks and embracing the Complete Street design approach with the goal of improving traffic flow, pedestrian safety, and bike safety. And I'd support transit-oriented development projects in our village centers where public transportation is available.

11. What do you believe the role is of local elected leaders in promoting progressive policies at the state and national level?

Although of course the primary responsibility of local elected leaders is to focus on municipal issues, we must recognize that we operate as one municipality within a state and a nation. As such, we are all interconnected, and what happens on the state and national level affects us all – including, at times, the budget and resources Newton has available to provide city services.

Our local elected officials have a platform available to them to advocate for progressive policies that affect all of us. That doesn't mean we must or even should get involved in every state and national issue. But it does mean that our friends and neighbors often look to us for guidance on how to approach the issues of our time. I'm proud that Newton is often regarded as a thought leader, and that we have a reputation for our cutting-edge willingness to experiment and lead on common-sense policies that eventually influence our state and nation to move forward. Marriage equality, transgender rights, and efforts to combat climate change are prime examples. Like local leaders who have come before me and paved the way on many of these issues, I will not hesitate to speak up and lead where appropriate

We can influence the discourse on the state level, and even the national level.

12. Why are people poor?

For most workers in the United States, real wages have stagnated or even declined since the 1970s, despite large gains in productivity across our economy. The productivity gains we have realized have accrued to the wealthiest among us, leaving our middle class and working families behind. Increasingly, we see lack of access to good-paying jobs and lack of educational opportunity in those communities most vulnerable among us. Coupled with lack of access to affordable healthcare, our working families are struggling to make ends meet.

YES/NO (Massachusetts state legislature bill numbers follow in parentheses, where applicable):

1. Do you support or oppose a \$15/hour minimum wage? (S1004 / H2365)

Support

2. Do you support or oppose paid family medical leave? (S1048 / H2172)

Support

3. Do you support or oppose the 2018 ballot question to place a 4% increased tax rate on taxable income over a million dollars per year?

Support

4. Do you support or oppose the 2018 ballot question to roll back protections for transgender individuals in public accommodations?

Oppose

5. Do you support the safe communities act? (S1305 / H3269)

Yes

6. Do you support the great neighborhoods bill? (S81)

Yes

7. Do you believe Newton has met its obligation to provide affordable housing under MGL Chapter 40B?

As City Councilor, I will work to ensure that Newton always meets its affordable housing obligation under MGL Chapter 40B. It is important for Newton to create real affordable housing options for our seniors, working families, and young professionals, and as City Councilor, I will advocate for Newton to comply and exceed these requirements.

Thank you!