

Progressive Newton 2017 Municipal Candidates' Questionnaire

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

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 value our unions and our workers. I have been upfront against the outsourcing of our custodians and have been in favor of growing our in-house staff - like our forestry division. Having staff who actually have a vested interest in this City is extremely valuable and much more reliable and dependable to ensure the work gets done and done right.

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

I believe in employing a multi-pronged strategy to increase our affordable housing stock that includes preservation as well as moderate development. As our housing consultant reported,

*"If the City is to grow as it is projected to through 2030, development patterns will need to change to accommodate anyone other than the wealthiest consumers. Given the limited amount of available vacant land, a mix of moderate density (multi-unit) development will need to be considered to accommodate additional households and allow for greater housing choice. **That said, the City will not build its way to affordability.** **The imbalance of demand and supply is so great that the City could not physically accommodate the development needed to affect pricing in a substantial manner. To this point, a combination of preservation and new construction will be necessary to ensure some level of price diversity within Newton.**"*

(emphasis added).

I will move forward to create a Municipal Housing Trust that will draw upon Community Preservation Act funds as well as Inclusionary Zoning funds and any other funds in order to outright purchase existing homes, purchase preservation restrictions and/or renegotiate expiring restrictions. (I proposed the idea of purchasing existing homes with CPA funds along with Councilor Ciccone with housing folks and the Planning Department several years ago). I support moderately sized development (like the Turtle Lane Playhouse and the Austin Street project and increasing the inclusionary housing requirements. I believe that the City must push back hard with developers to increase the number of affordable units that are offered (like I did, with Austin Street).

I recently brought the Planning Department and representatives from Metro West and Can-DO with me to visit an existing apartment complex (126 units consisting of studios, 1 bedrooms and 2 bedrooms - all moderately sized and not luxury apartments) located across from the the Riverside MBTA station in Auburndale. The complex was up for sale. The City should be prepared to act on these types of opportunities so that we can attempt an outright purchase, partner with another organization or developer, or purchase preservation restrictions within the complex to add to our affordable housing inventory. Having a Municipal Housing Trust - and a Planning Department focused on these types of opportunities can help in the future.

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?

Yes, I support the welcoming city ordinance. In fact, I was a co-sponsor of the compromise Welcoming City Ordinance that was approved by the City Council. As Mayor, I would like to have an outreach program to welcome all new residents into this City and include distribution of a packet of information on City resources to direct residents to the services they need. We are very fortunate that Mayor Warren finally created an LGBTQ Liaison for the City. I cannot stress the importance for our community to know that the City of Newton is here for all residents. Also, as Mayor, I would work with the City Council on adopting a home rule petition that would allow Legal Permanent Residents the ability to vote in local elections - similar to a resolution I supported that was filed by Councilor Ted Hess Mahan many years ago.

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

To combat global climate change, increase renewable energy and decrease energy consumption in Newton, as Mayor, I will:

Develop a Plan to move the City towards Zero Waste.

1. **Reduce the amount of waste hauled to landfills:** This not only has the environmental benefit of reducing methane gas emissions, it saves the City money because our trash fees are based on tonnage of waste. By diverting recyclables and food waste/organics from our regular trash stream, we can save the City money while saving our planet.
2. **Increase the City's Recycling Rate:** Make it easier for all residents to recycle - including multi-family and condos, mandate

business recycling and assist non-profit businesses in their recycling efforts

3. Pilot a curbside or drop-off food waste/organics collection

program. Pleased to announce that the City will move forward with this initiative in 2018.

4. Developing programs at our schools to divert food waste -

Pleased to announce I'm already on top of this. I have met with School Administration to discuss and we are already working toward this goal.

Adopt a 100% Renewable Energy Plan.

- City must divest from fossil fuel investments
- Move City fleet to fuel-efficient or electric vehicles
- Require all new municipal construction and development using City funds to be net-zero or employee net-zero building practices
- Make improvements to our roadways to accommodate biking and walking
- Work with State officials to increase service on the commuter rail
- Provide free EV-only parking in City lots and on-street where possible
- Provide tax breaks for homes that meet a renewable energy target
- Community Choice Aggregation for electric supply

Maximize solar installations - including community solar projects so even residents who are renters — or homeowners who do not have suitable roof for solar — can access clean energy.

Ensure all City departments are implementing sound environmental policies.

- Reduce, reuse and recycle wherever possible
- Encourage City workers to use public transportation with a TDM program
- Fund planting of more trees
- Ensure that sustainability is an integral part in every decision we make - particularly purchasing

5. What does Black Lives Matter mean to you?

Black Lives Matter is a movement formed in response to the shooting deaths of unarmed black men by police officers but for me, it means more than that. It means that we, as a society, need to wake up and realize that we have not progressed nearly as far as we liberals may have thought. That equality is not attainable for all - particularly for blacks in America. That institutional racism is a systemic problem at all levels - housing discrimination, employment, incarceration and detention, immigration, and income inequality. That we need, as a society, to address and fix this now or the divisiveness will continue to grow. For me, a woman of color, black lives do matter.

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

Yes. I will not tolerate bigotry in any form especially any display of discriminatory language used by our city staff and employees.

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

As Mayor, I will work with the City Council and explore:

Raising the minimum wage, adopt paid family medical leave (I have already docketed an item for the City to adopt the paid earned sick time for part-time employees), work with our businesses, non-profits and educational institutions to provide better access to childcare, and affordable pre-K programs, provide accessible and affordable health screenings and counseling services, ensure that city contractors and vendors pay a living wage to their employees, create educational programs for skills development, create job opportunities by encouraging businesses to locate here in Newton, and work with our local financial institutions to provide financial counseling.

8. Under what circumstances would you support an override?

I believe we need to adopt a culture of viewing overrides as making an investment in our community rather than an “OMG the sky is falling approach.” I’d rather see us get ahead of our financial situation rather than have our programs and services erode while we wait to go to the voters. I have publicly stated that we need an override now. The next Mayor will have to put forth an override within the next four years (I believe in two years - first year - plan for it - second year execute and go to the voters). Anyone who has served on the City Council has to know this. Our schools were already seeing a shortfall in this past year’s budget and did not hire additional teaching staff to accommodate the increased enrollment in our high schools. The City has \$1 billion in unfunded pension and OPEB liabilities and we have debt to pay. Newton is a wonderful community and I want to make it even better. In order to ensure excellence in our schools, programs and services for our residents, renovated school and municipal facilities, maintenance and acquisition of our open space and parks (Crystal Lake and Webster Woods), and infrastructure improvements - so we can attract more businesses, we will need more revenue.

As Mayor, I will look for efficiencies in all of our departments. I will work with the Economic Development Commission, the Planning Department, the City Council and the community to develop an Economic Development Plan to grow our commercial tax base. I will negotiate strong PILOT (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) and SILOT (Services in Lieu of Taxes) - to help fund or provide much needed services in our schools (teacher aides), for our residents (social workers, outreach) or employment opportunities for our seniors. I will go to our resident volunteers and provide tools for them to help with maintenance of our parks and playgrounds and our facilities. But all of this will take time and as Mayor, I will not allow our educational services or our senior services facilities and our infrastructure to deteriorate. I will go to the voters and provide clear choices on funding the programs, services, open space and capital needs for this City.

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 Mayor, I will work with the City Council to adopt my multi-pronged approach to affordable housing which includes moderate development and preservation of existing housing stock. I would work with the City Council and request CPA funds, funds from a Municipal Housing Trust (should one be created as mentioned above), or any other available funding sources, to preserve our existing housing stock:

- Purchase smaller homes before they are all lost to development and replaced with multi-million dollar out-of-scale rebuilds and add these to our permanently affordable housing stock
- Purchase existing private rental properties in order to keep tenants in place and add these units into our permanently affordable housing stock

- Create a home preservation loan fund to help lower income homeowners - particularly the elderly. Funds could be re-paid when the property is sold. The loan could be used to help pay down mortgage costs or make safety and accessibility improvements in the home to allow seniors to age in place.
- Provide a Down-Payment assistance program for low-income households to encourage home ownership and help preserve and grow wealth.

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

As Mayor, I would promote use of public transportation and encourage other means of transit to get more cars off the roads.

We need to get people to public transportation. As Mayor, I will continue to advocate (as I've been doing for years while on the City Council) for a shuttle to get people - particularly kids and seniors - to various locations in and around the city and to transport people to train and bus stops. I will partner with different shuttle service/car service providers and encourage ride shares for students and seniors.

We need to adopt Transit Demand Management (TDM) programs. As Mayor, I would implement a TDM program for city employees and require businesses and new developments to do the same.

We need protected bus and train shelters. We need to have safe and protected areas for people waiting to take public transportation during inclement weather. As Mayor, I will work with businesses and create public/private partnerships to design and fund these shelters.

We need to make our transit stations accessible. As Mayor, I will continue to lobby our State Representatives and MassDOT to move forward with accessibility improvements to all of our commuter rail stations.

We need to encourage other forms of transportation. As Mayor, I will insist on designs for our roads to accommodate cars, bicycles and pedestrians. Narrow roadways to slow down traffic and make it safer for pedestrians, install protected bike lanes on major roadways, increase time for walk signals and fix our sidewalks so people can walk safely.

Promote Bike Share and Car Share programs. As Mayor, I will seek to have a city-bike share services at all of our train stations and also in all of our village centers.

We need reliable and efficient public transportation. We don't have that now. As Mayor, I will lobby the state to increase service and lower costs to gain more ridership.

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

Local elected leaders should be at the forefront of policy initiatives at the state and national level. We have the power to accomplish real change in our community on a local level. For example, by adopting environmental progressive policies - like the ban on plastic bags or polystyrene - we can help change the culture of behavior and reliance on these products and hopefully create a movement that will grow across the Commonwealth and the nation and help save the planet.

Local elected leaders should also support citizen petitions, initiatives, resolutions and lobby our state and federal legislators on important social and environmental issues.

As Mayor, I will put forth a bold plan for Newton to become an environmental leader, and put forth a multi-pronged approach to create more affordable housing opportunities. I will lobby our state and federal legislators to increase the minimum wage, provide affordable healthcare, provide more subsidies for housing, enact paid family medical leave, call

for nuclear disarmament, enforce environmental laws, put a price on carbon, and divest from countries that violate human rights, and more. I believe change begins at the local level and I am ready to lead the way.

12. Why are people poor?

People are poor because we allow for a culture of systemic oppression by exclusive and highly financed groups that seek to control government for their special interests and are indifferent to and ignore the needs of those less empowered and less fortunate. This permeates on all levels. Control by these highly financed groups and corporations over government has hindered our ability as a nation and as a society to provide access to health care, jobs, decent wages, affordable housing, education and food. No one in this country should ever have to choose between putting food on the table, getting medicine and healthcare that they need and having a safe place to sleep. Until we wake up and do something about it, more people will become poor.

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

1. Do you support or oppose at \$15/hour minimum wage? (S1004/H2365). YES, I support the bills to increase the minimum wage to \$15/hour but that is not enough to make ends meet.
2. Do you support or oppose paid family medical leave? (S1048/H2172. YES, I support the bills for paid family medical leave. In fact, I docketed an item before the City Council to adopt the State's paid sick leave law which exempts municipalities for our part-time workers.
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? YES, I support the 2018 ballot question to place a 4%

increased tax rate on taxable income over a million dollars per year. It's about time!

4. Do you support or oppose the 2018 ballot question to roll back protections for transgender individuals in public accommodations? I OPPOSE this ballot question and any ballot question or legislation that would roll back protections for transgender individuals in public accommodations.
5. Do you support the safe communities act? (S1305/H3269) YES, I support the Safe Communities Act. It will not prevent our police officers from enforcing the law - just limit the amount of voluntary collaboration with immigration officials and it will not put the City in jeopardy of federal funding. The bills would allow our local and state police to focus on crime - not do the job of federal immigration officers, it preserves due process for all - citizens and non-citizens, it prohibits the creation of any type of registry of people of any particular religious or national origin and it affirms our commitment to all people regardless of where they were born.
6. Do you support the Great Neighborhoods Bill? (S81). Yes, in concept, I support the Great Neighborhoods Bill. I believe in smart growth principles but I believe smart growth must include community planning and respect for the surrounding environment. Our City recently passed an amendment to the Accessory Apartment ordinance which allows for by-right accessory apartments within a structure that meets certain dimensional requirements, and we also have an Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance (though I am proposing we amend the percentage from 15% - 25% affordable - slightly different than Mayor Warren's proposal which would include workforce housing).
7. Do you believe Newton has met its obligation to provide affordable housing under MGL Chapter 40B? I believe the Newton has met the 1.5% land area requirement under Chapter 40B. I still believe we have a long way to go to increase affordable housing opportunities in this City and as Mayor, I am committed to

increasing our affordable housing inventory through a multi-pronged approach that allows for moderately dense development and preservation.