

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:

Answers by Cheryl Lappin:

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 support the right of workers to organize and have always valued our unions and the benefits and protections they provide for their members. In my opinion, working with the unions is far preferable than outsourcing. As a City Councilor responsible for using taxpayer money wisely I could not say I would never support outsourcing but the savings would have to be extraordinary.

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

We do not have enough affordable housing options in Newton. For seniors on fixed incomes looking to downsize and stay in the City and young people who would like to live in the City where they grew up there are very few options. It is very important to me to find ways to increase the affordable options in Newton. Here are some things we can do: Get the word out about our new accessory apartment ordinance, strengthen our inclusionary zoning ordinance to require more affordable housing with new developments, update our zoning in village centers and near public transportation to allow additional additional density for more affordable housing, create a housing trust and partnering with affordable housing organizations.

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. With the increase in hate crimes and the encouragement from the President fueling discrimination of all kinds it is essential that we on the local level do all we can to encourage diversity and discourage intolerance. We can start with City government, ensuring a culture of acceptance and inclusion and a zero tolerance for discrimination. Also, employees in City government should reflect the make-up of our community.

I do not feel that we have done enough to address the racist, anti-semitic and homophobic incidences that we have seen over the past few years in the schools. There needs to be a clear message of inclusion and clear consequences for hateful behavior.

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

We have been working for many years and are continuing to make our municipal buildings more energy efficient. I support a zero-waste goal for our city. Our Public Works department has identified many areas to get us to this goal including composting programs, municipal aggregation and solar programs to name a few. We can't stop with city buildings. We should expand our outreach to citizens and develop a guide with concrete examples of how they can lower their carbon footprint and resources for them to make it happen.

5. What does Black Lives Matter mean to you?

Black Lives Matter, to me, is an indication that racism is alive and well despite years of progress. It is a call to action for us to look at ourselves and our communities and to work together to fight racism.

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

Yes and all employees should have to go through discrimination/harassment training.

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

A couple of things that come to mind to help income inequality in Newton are requiring that Newton residents get priority when approving funds for affordable housing developments (when applicable). Another is and making sure families know about programs in our schools that provide subsidies and waivers for programs.

8. Under what circumstances would you support an override?

Supporting an override would be a last resort. To ask the taxpayers for additional money in perpetuity (operational override) there would have to be a serious need and the funds would need to be clearly defined. I would be more inclined to support a debt exclusion override (which ends when the project is funded) for a large capital project if absolutely necessary.

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.

Some steps I would take would include increasing the number of affordable units in Newton, making sure that we promote any programs that provide subsidies or scholarships in the schools, advocating for full day kindergarten which will help working families and getting the word out about Tax assistance programs available through the city and state.

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

MBTA services in Newton need to be improved and expanded. I would advocate for accessible and more frequent MBTA bus, commuter rail and T service. In addition to providing better services for our citizens, expanded transportation will attract businesses to Newton and increase our tax base. I would also like to explore regional shuttles and ride sharing services.

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

Personally I agree with most progressive policies. The role of non-partisan local elected leaders is to represent the citizens and make the city the best it can be. We should advocate at the state and federal level if there is a direct impact on the City of Newton which may include progressive policies.

12. Why are people poor?

There are a myriad of reasons that people may be dealing with financial hardships.

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)

Support

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

No. I would like Newton to maintain control of its zoning decisions.

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

I am not sure if we have legally met our obligation but whether we have or not, creating affordable housing is a priority for me and should be a priority for the City.

Thank you!