

# JP Progressive Candidate Questionnaire

*150 word maximum, no minimum. We will publish your answers in their entirety in the web version of this Candidate Survey. In the printed version, we reserve the right to edit for length, but not for meaning or intent.*

## **1. Why do you want to be a District City Councilor?**

### **2. Affordable Housing**

The community planning process for the Forest Hills Improvement Initiative set a goal of having 50% housing on publicly-owned land and 30% on privately-owned be affordable. Do you support these goals?

### **3. Development**

What type of development should be prioritized in Jamaica Plain and Boston, and how will you use your office to help move these projects forward?

### **4. Environment and Energy**

If you are elected, what are three specific actions you would propose for the City of Boston to promote energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and improve green space in Boston?

### **Youth Violence**

5. Given the resurgence of youth violence in the city, what specific steps would you take to ensure the safety of youth in our city?

6. What is your vision for youth in the City of Boston, and what do we need to do to get there?

### **7. Accountability, Transparency**

What are 2 proposals you would recommend to improve accountability and transparency in city government?

## **8. Charter Reform**

Do you believe the City Charter should be reviewed and revised? If no, why? If yes, what would your priorities for review or change be?

## **Education**

9. We know the FY12 City budget will include the closing of some public schools. What will your priorities be when approaching this decision?

10. The cost of the City's school transportation plan is of concern to many and proposals to revise it will be debated during the FY12 budget process. What is your proposal for revising the BPS transportation plan?

11. Boston is slated to receive about 25% of Race to the Top Funds. The state will issue guidelines about how districts should use the funds. If you had an opportunity to weigh in, how would you advocate BPS invests that money?

## **12. Jobs**

Most job growth in Metro Boston has occurred in Boston suburbs, while minority populations have been growing in the central city. Black and Latino residents have faced unemployment rates 3 times the rate of white residents and Asian residents twice that of whites. What single new or existing policy would you support that would have the greatest impact on unemployment and job disparities in Boston?

## **Labor**

13. Earlier this year, an arbitrator awarded the firefighters a \$19M contract over 5 years; do you think City Councilors were obligated to support the decision?

14. As the City goes into negotiations with the other unions (e.g. teachers, police) in the City, what role do you think the City Council can play?

## **15. Race and Diversity**

Affirmative action policies have recently been watered down by court decisions at the federal level. What are some creative policies other than affirmative action that the city could implement that would support and retain diversity within its workforce?

## **Budget Policy**

16. What are 2 suggestions you have for making the City budget process more transparent?

17. Health care costs continue to rise and the City has limited power to address this. The State has the power to manage the benefit design of employees without Union negotiation but the City does not. City employee labor unions have opposed these changes, saying it undermines their collective bargaining power. Would you support the home rule petition (filed by the Mayor) granting the City this authority?

18. During the FY11 budget process, 4 libraries and 8 community centers were closed and many of our lowest paid city workers (librarians, custodians) were laid off. What city services or department budgets will you work to protect or eliminate in next year's budget?

### **Lightening Round (Yes or No)**

19. Many workers in Boston are organizing to form unions, especially in the hospitals. Will you publicly support their efforts to organize?
20. Do you support the death penalty?
21. Do you support same sex marriage?
22. Do you support anti-discrimination laws that protect someone from being fired, or denied housing, education, or access to public facilities (including bathrooms) based on their gender identity?
23. Are you pro-choice?
24. Would you support a state constitutional amendment implementing a progressive income tax?

# Kosta Demos

## 1. Why do you want to be a District City Councilor?

I believe this progressive and creative community deserves representation that mirrors those attributes. I also know that the next year is going to be a busy one for the Council. Redistricting, charter reform, and expanded home rule are all going to be on the table. I want to be a part of that process.

I've spent nearly my entire life in the district. I have been politically active here for almost three decades. I believe I am in tune with the concerns of Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury. Charter reform. Electoral reform. School zones. I have the temperament and experience to build the coalitions necessary to achieve real results on these issues.

Also, I confess I just love the hurly-burly and over-caf-feinated sociability of local politics.

## 2. Affordable Housing

Yes, I do.

## 3. Development

Because of environmental pressures, the next decade is going to see a huge shift in urban planning priorities: greater vertical density, a tighter transit grid, more emphasis on foot versus automotive traffic, reconfiguration of horizontal planes to restore watershed efficacy... it's a long list. Realizing these priorities is going to be made difficult by hostility to central planning at the grass roots level. Having worked on these issues for years locally, I think I am well equipped to facilitate constructive dialogue between community organizations and planning authorities.

Personally, I think we should be working right now on a mid-rise, mixed use revamping of our existing commercial corridors and on concentrating new rental housing and small retail within the cachement radii of the Orange Line stations in J.P./Roxbury and the commuter rail in Roslindale and West Roxbury.

## 4. Environment and Energy

It's hard to pare down the many possibilities to three. But here a few that immediately spring to mind:

- The city's vehicle fleet should be local emissions free. Right now.
- Full green roof implementation for all city properties. Incentives or regulatory requirement applied to private property owners for same.

- The city needs to be more aggressive in its advocacy for expanded public transportation infrastructure. Implementation of the MAPC's "Urban Ring" plan is overdue largely due to lackluster support from city hall. Restoration of light rail service abandoned in the 70's and 80's would be a great step forward. We're lagging sadly behind the rest of the nation in that regard.

## Youth Violence

### 5. SPECIFIC STEPS

The current economic downturn has brought on a predictable escalation of property crimes and "crimes of opportunity" to which I think the BPD has responded with appropriate vigilance. But organized criminal activity by adolescents is a separate phenomenon that can only be effectively addressed by direct, one-on-one intervention at the street level. It's costly and labor intensive, but it works.

If we want to do something about the guns, we'll have to take a deep breath and throw ourselves into a national debate about carry rights generally and gun sales specifically.

### 6. VISION

I want to see our youth fully engaged politically, intellectually and culturally. The Hyde Square Youth Task Force is a great example of what I'd like to see going on city-wide.

## 7. Accountability, Transparency

- The immediate electronic publication of all the city's administrative and legislative deliberations, in easily intelligible language and universally searchable format.
- Enforcement of existing law. Attorney General Coakley's refusal to prosecute Mike Kineavey for what appears to have been deliberate destruction of public records is a disgrace.

## 8. Charter Reform

Yes. There are many things I'd like to tweak. But my top priorities would be the establishment of parity between the mayor's office and the council, the realignment of council seats, and the adoption of instant run-off elections for all city offices.

## Education

### 9. EDUCATION BUDGET

I cannot support the closure of any elementary schools. In fact, we need more of them.

### 10. SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

I think we should have a goal of walk-to schools for every child in the city. But we can only achieve this goal if there is a consensus among all communities concerned. Many in the city's predominantly black and Hispanic neighborhoods fear that we will return to a system of de facto segregation. I think that they're right to be wary. But we should keep in

mind that the city's demographic metrics have shifted dramatically since the 70's. With a planning process based on inclusiveness, creativity and mutual good will, we can solve this conundrum.

#### *11. RACE TO THE TOP FUNDING*

Race to the Top is a horribly put together program. Sweeping off funding for schools that demonstrably require greater assistance is just dumb. Jonathan Kozol is right: All we need to fix our schools is love and money. And anyone who says otherwise is either lying or deluded.

#### **12. Jobs**

We need a growth ring policy like that in Seattle, that more tightly constricts suburban sprawl, one that is comprehensive, addressing industry as well as housing. Aside from environmental impact, one of the great effects of such a policy is the attraction of commercial activity back into the urban core which, in turn, creates jobs.

Boston's regulatory environment is punitive and confusing. People shouldn't be walking away from the start-up process in bewilderment and anger.

#### **Labor**

#### *13. FIREFIGHTER ARBITRATION DECISION*

No.

#### *14. CITY COUNCIL ROLE IN LABOR NEGOTIATIONS*

The council should be tempering extremism on both sides, reminding all players that the immediate operational needs of the city trump the bragging rights of the negotiating parties. The city council should refuse to fund agreements that fail to meet this standard.

#### **15. Race and Diversity**

Affirmative action is necessary and just. I see no need to come up with cutesy alternative names for it. Either we do the right thing or we don't. Just because someone else had a

clumsily drafted policy doesn't mean we shouldn't refine and redouble our own efforts.

#### **Budget Policy**

#### *16. BUDGET TRANSPARENCY*

One suggestion: just make it transparent! The entire process should be public. After all, there are no proprietary trade secrets involved — heck, either you pay for stuff or you don't.

See my remarks on charter reform above.

#### *17. MUNICIPAL CONTROL OVER HEALTH PLAN DESIGN*

I am in favor of anything that moves us closer to a universal, single payer healthcare system. If the petition seeks to fold municipal employees into the state plan, and requires the city to cover the differential cost of meeting negotiated benefits, I'm for it. But I don't think the city should be allowed to simply walk away from benefits negotiated in good faith.

#### *18. BUDGET PRIORITIES*

I think the mayor's cuts have been penny wise and pound foolish. It is easy to look brave and principled by making dramatic cuts to big ticket budget items. But I believe there are far greater gains to be made by examining operational and administrative excesses and redundancies — small lapses of oversight and practical management that cost little individually but cost vast sums collectively. A top to bottom, third party operational audit could work wonders for the city's bottom line.

#### **Lightening Round (Yes or No)**

- 19. Support union organizing. **Yes**
- 20. Support the death penalty? **No**
- 21. Support same sex marriage? **Yes**
- 22. Support anti-discrimination laws **Yes**
- 23. Pro-choice? **Yes**
- 24. Support progressive income tax? **Yes**