

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?

Sean Ryan

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

I am running for office because government is enacting flawed economic and social policies. I will work to undo these policies and help the people of Boston raise their standards of living. I have an acute focus on the three most important issues facing the people of District 6 today: schools, services and safety. I offer common sense solutions that reflect the needs and sensibilities of my JP and West Roxbury neighbors, and that will not require higher taxes or new fees in order to implement.

2. Affordable Housing

The solution to a lack of affordable housing is to revise outdated zoning codes, lower taxes on residential property owners, and let the market respond to consumer demand. There is going to be additional demand for rental units as the turmoil in the mortgage market continues. We should let developers respond to demand for housing by allowing dense developments in several key locations: 1) along commercial main streets (a la Brookline); 2) around MBTA stations (transit-oriented development); and 3) on unused or vacant properties. High prices are an incentive for people to build new housing. Government intervention into the market for housing, however well-intentioned, fails to accomplish its stated goals and ends up politicizing the development process. We must be wary of creating a situation in which only the poor (via subsidized rents or government-owned projects) and the wealthy can afford to live in the city.

3. Development

Government should not prioritize certain kinds of development — in a free society, it is the people's priorities that matter. Jackson Square could be a vibrant mixed-use hub of activity, accessible by T and at the crossroads of two neighborhoods. The best way to see development happen quickly and cost-effectively is to sell off government-owned or controlled land in the area, and let the market discover uses catering to the needs of consumers. If a developer determined that demand in that particular location made profitable a slim, 30-story rental apartment tower, where many younger folks could live — freeing up our triple-decker stock for young families — I would not be inclined to oppose it. Cities are supposed to grow — and the market is a better “planner” than any politician. We need new, clearly-worded zoning regulations that

reflect the concerns of residents but also allow the housing market to expand.

4. Environment and Energy

Over the coming years, as fuel prices rise, we will see many more urban dwellers getting out of their cars and onto bicycles and/or mass transit. Since government agencies control our roads, parks, paths and subways, we should focus on making these transportation options safer, more reliable and more cost effective. Along these lines, I will work to ensure that covered, secure bike-storage facilities exist at all MBTA subway and commuter rail stations. I will support ride-sharing networks and businesses, so that neighbors can minimize their transportation costs. I will also work to make sure that all public park land is being fully used, in ways that local residents prefer. One example would be converting under-used sections of the Southwest Corridor into dog parks, creating a less attractive environment for those involved in illicit activities, and allowing responsible pet owners to get the most out of their urban experience.

Youth Violence

5. SPECIFIC STEPS

6. VISION

Urban violence can often be linked to drug activity. I oppose the “war on drugs,” support the legalization and regulation of recreational drugs like marijuana, and believe that a focus on addiction treatment, rather than the incarceration of non-violent offenders, will save us money and help to unclog our already strained criminal justice system. Just as alcohol prohibition in the 1920's led to a pronounced rise in organized crime and violence, drug prohibition today creates urban black market activity between actors who sometimes resort to force to settle disputes over property, because they cannot ask the government to arbitrate. Ceasing to enforce laws against private, non-violent activities will free the police to focus on tried-and-true preventative measures like beat-walking and community policing. As city councilor, I will hold hearings in all 11 police districts to bring together community leaders and police, so they can educate each other on actions that need to be taken to tamp down on violence. Sensible solutions will make our streets safer, and will save us money.

7. Accountability, Transparency

I am an advocate of total transparency in government. Technology allows the online publication of municipal expenses and salaries, in an easily searchable format. Service-related requests can be tracked, and records of these requests can be made available to the public. City workers can be locatable through GPS technology, and the public can see, via the city website, the location of public servants, as well as their task assignment. We deserve to know how our dollars are being spent.

8. Charter Reform

I believe that the City of Boston needs to be more independent from the government of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and that — in order best to serve Bostonians — our local officials should be able to make certain policy changes without the need to ask permission from the state legislature (via the home rule petition process). I also believe that certain agencies — like the BRA — need to be reformed or closed.

Education

9. EDUCATION BUDGET

10. SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

11. RACE TO THE TOP FUNDING

As a former student and volunteer and current BPS teacher and Teachers Union member — I understand the challenges facing educators in the BPS and the concerns of District 6 parents. The closing of schools is nothing new. Working and middle class families have been alienated from the BPS for decades. Band-aid measures will not fix the system. We need to focus our attention on three of the most important issues, reach a consensus, and begin implementing permanent reforms. We should reform the assignment process (the “lottery”) and provide neighborhood schools for parents who want them, with other options for parents with other preferences or special needs. We must phase out busing, which serves no educational purpose and accounts for 10% of the BPS budget, using the cost savings to provide arts, music, sports, and after-school programs. We must decide once and for all whether charter schools — which are taxpayer-funded — are part of a fair and legitimate model for urban education. If so, we should provide this public service for all who desire it, instead of arbitrarily relegating 8000 students to a waiting list.

12. Jobs

Government cannot “save or create” jobs. Jobs are created by investors, entrepreneurs and businessmen. Minimum wage laws create unemployment among less-skilled workers, and drive jobs overseas. If we want more jobs for the unemployed, we need to lower taxes, stop enacting new regulations and other new costs to business owners, and let people keep more of their money.

Labor

13. FIREFIGHTER ARBITRATION DECISION

14. CITY COUNCIL ROLE IN LABOR NEGOTIATIONS

No member of the City Council was obligated to support

the arbitrators’ settlement of the contract dispute between the City and Local 718. As a City Councilor and a member of two unions, I will strive to be a fair and unbiased mediator between the City and its employees.

15. Race and Diversity

I do not believe in any form of collectivism, a philosophy in which a person’s identity is derived more from her membership in a group, rather than her own unique and personal characteristics. I strive to treat all individuals with respect, and not to make distinctions based upon skin color. I would hope that all public employees would be hired (or fired) based upon an objective measurement of their job performance, and not based upon racial characteristics. I would point out, however, that local governments — broken up into smaller jurisdictions — are more likely to reflect the makeup and sensibilities of their people than centralized governments.

Budget Policy

16. BUDGET TRANSPARENCY

17. MUNICIPAL CONTROL OVER HEALTH PLAN DESIGN

18. BUDGET PRIORITIES

All city expenses, down to the transaction, all RFPs and contract bids, and all invoices for services received should be posted online in an easily searchable, free database. I do not support the unilateral imposition of contract alterations — if the City would like to renegotiate with its employees in light of the deteriorating economic situation, I would support and assist in those negotiations. I will work to ensure that the most vulnerable members of society — children and the elderly — are protected during a time when public expenditures must be curtailed.

Lightening Round (Yes or No)

19. Support union organizing. **I support all voluntary associations**
20. Support the death penalty? **No**
21. Support same sex marriage? **Government should enforce contracts between consenting adults**
22. Support anti-discrimination laws. **Public services should be provided without discrimination**
23. Pro-choice? **Family planning is a personal issue to be handled by families, not the Federal government**
24. Support progressive income tax? **No**