



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2021 Borough President Candidate Questionnaire

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Self

Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability:

1) If elected, what would be your top priority in your first term?

I would like to make sure housing insecurities are properly addressed and will work on getting real affordable housing in Brooklyn. This starts by getting the powers that be to reevaluate the AMI (Area Median Income) so that it just includes the five boroughs. I would also like to work on getting the Faircloth amendment repealed so the city can build more affordable housing (instead of private developers whose idea of affordable housing seem to be studio apartments with \$2,000 monthly rents) and we can begin moving the homeless veterans off of the street and take homeless people out of shelters and hotels.

2) What personal and/or professional experiences do you believe make you uniquely qualified to run for Borough President? Attach resume or CV if desired.

I was born and raised in Brooklyn and believe I have a good understanding of our many needs and wants. Brooklyn is very diverse with many cultures and different languages that are spoken. My experience working within the United Nations system prepared me for working in a multicultural environment, my experience serving on the Board of Directors of the Sierra House helped me with my leadership skills, my experience working with non-profits showed me the importance in connecting with stakeholders, and my experience serving on Community Board 17 helped me get a better understanding on serving the community. One of my strengths is listening and if one is to be a public official then they must get accustomed to listening to their constituents. I am also determined, once I put my mind to something I follow through and right now my mind is set on becoming the next Brooklyn Borough President and that determination is what will help me lead.

3) List all of your endorsements, including but not limited to elected officials, unions, political clubs and community-based organizations.

As I am not an elected official and I am considered an outsider running a people powered campaign I don't have a long list of elected officials and activist endorsing me since I do not know any of them personally. I have been invited for a number of endorsement interviews by democratic clubs and hopefully some of them may find that their values align with the values I am running on and may take a chance on the little guy and support me. Hopefully, your organization will be one of them. I understand you will want to pick an elected official you think is a "sure win" but with rank choice voting you now have the option of choosing more than one person to support. So, after you've made your decision on your first-choice endorsement, won't you



please consider this little guy as your second choice because I will fight for your rights and your values and ensure that we won't be going along with the status quo.

4) What, if any, groups or industries will you not accept campaign contributions from? If any, please note specifically whose money you will not accept.

I am running a people-powered campaign and will not be accepting contributions from corporations, LLC's, partnerships and law enforcement unions or their affiliates”

5) How do you propose helping NYC recover from the COVID pandemic and resulting economic recession, particularly given the projected shortfall in city revenue?

We will be getting a new Mayor so first I would like to see the plan they put forth then I will be able to see how I can contribute to the plan and make sure Brooklyn is able to get the resources it needs to recover from the pandemic.

6) What measures would you take to improve educational opportunities for all students in NYC? How do you plan to ensure that all NYC children are able to attend high-quality, integrated schools? Do you support D15's integration plan as it has been implemented? What changes, if any, would you make to the current D15 integration plan?

The D15 plan kind of reminds me of all of the busing that took place in the 60's and 70s. It looks good on paper but all of the affluent parents will just remove their kids to private schools leaving the public schools right back where they started. A better plan might be to model under-achieving schools after high-achieving schools that are passing the citywide exams, that help with teacher moral, and have great staff administration. We have to look at funding too; like do they receive the same funding as high achievement schools and if not, we close that gap.

7) How would you have handled the reopening of schools for the 2020-2021 academic year? How would you prepare for a second wave of this pandemic? How would you propose to ensure that the needs of highly vulnerable children with special needs, who are homeless, come from poor families, and/or live in households without adults who could aid their learning are not left further behind when remote learning has to be relied on?

The constant stress of opening then closing and trying to figure out by watching all of the news programs to see the Mayor say one thing then the Governor say another and not really be on the same page is exhausting. There are millions of students in the public-school system and all health concerns should have been sorted before ever deciding to re-open. From the beginning it should have been announced that school would be closed until January 2021. Then they could have used that time to clean the schools, put plexiglass on all of the desk so that each student is covered since they can't social distance in class, and purchased the necessary PPE so that all students and teachers have enough.

They could also put in plans to keep open the regional enrichment centers, that was being used for first



responder's children, open for children who need a safe place to be just in case going back to class isn't an option for health reasons but being at home isn't safe either.

8) Do you support allowing non-citizen New York City residents to vote in City-based elections? Why or why not?

This is something I can get behind. Non-citizens who are permanent residents like green card holders should be able to vote in local city and state elections as long as they meet residency requirements. After-all they have to pay taxes too and as the saying goes no taxation without representation.

9) Do you support any campaign finance reforms for NYC? If so, please describe.

Yes, more reforms need to happen. It is great that the government has a matching funds program but I don't think money should be a reason that someone can not be on a ballot. Fundraising minimums, just to get on the ballot or to debate and thousands of dollars just to get access to the NPR Van is just ridiculous. A candidate may have a bunch of supporters who will vote for them but can't really spare the money to contribute to their campaign because they are under-employed. This is an expensive city to live in and they may need all of their funds to help with their survival. The city needs to adopt some of the federal rules like allowing the candidate to get a salary from their campaign just in case their place of employment doesn't allow campaigning for office for a variety of reasons; like it being a conflict of interest if the company wants to remain "Apolitical". At the end of the day each person gets one vote and money should not be a factor. This is the sort of thing that keeps people from running who may do wonders for the city. We need to remove all of these barriers to running for office. We also have too many special interest groups using money to get their way so the city basically bows down to their whim. They're more concerned with profit than seeing the city and its residents do better. We need to start putting people over profit and that's when we will begin to see real growth and prosperity amongst everyone, not just the wealthy.

10) Now that the State government has passed the Reproductive Health Act, what steps would you have the Council and City Hall take to increase reproductive healthcare access, including maternal healthcare, and to do so equitably?

There needs to be an educational outreach program so that everyone understands the act and they can dispel misinformation. They need to put together proper marketing materials and perhaps record a PSA so the information can get out to everyone who needs this information.

11) The MTA is facing a significant revenue shortfall and many parts of the city lack access to reliable public transportation. What measures would you implement and/or enforce, to promote safe, efficient, and accessible transportation options for mass transit users, pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers in Brooklyn?

If the coronavirus has taught us anything it is that it is possible to clean the New York City transit system thoroughly and daily but all this time they just didn't want to. It is a darn shame that it took a pandemic for it to happen but there you go. So, I think these cleanings need to continue even after we get the virus under control. There needs to be a complete audit of the MTA system. We need to find the redundancies and places where they can be more efficient and there are less trains stalling thereby making the system more



reliable. The subway system is over 100 years old and really needs a complete overhaul eventually which would be very expensive but something needs to be done before a piece of track fall and actually hit someone in the head which will lead to a very expensive lawsuit costing even more money. We need to stop putting band-aids on a very old system that can't keep up with today's needs. There is no reason why in the 21st century we don't have handicap accessibility at every train stop. We also need to ensure there are more safe bike lanes that travel along the bus lanes. We need to get transit police retrained so that their interactions with the homeless riding the trains can be handled better and safer and they direct them to the proper services that they require. We need to get rid of the rats!

Apparently, NYC owns the system and merely leases to the MTA so I would support putting together a committee to work on a Good feasible plan for NYC to go back to managing its own transit system instead of relying on people who never have to ride so they are not exactly paying attention to daily riders' concerns.

It won't be easy but if we work together, we can have a better well-functioning system.

12) How would you ensure fairness in employment, salary, workplace conditions, and promotion? What is your position on strengthening and increasing access to union membership?

I support unions, after-all, my mother was a member of 1199 so I got to see how having a union can be good for employees. Hiring practices need to transparent, salary ranges should be fair and equitable according to job description, credentials, and experience. Of course, workplaces should be safe and that is where the department of labor and unions come in if they are not.

13) How would you ensure that underserved communities receive fair and equitable treatment from city government? What policies do you support that would level the playing field for historically marginalized groups?

Bills that have been introduced to protect essential workers recently due to COVID-19 are the types of bills that I could see myself backing. It is important that we have laws that protect employees, especially during a global pandemic. I would also like to see something for Gig workers because there are many who basically work for themselves and need safety nets for times like these. I would also like to see a bill introduced to repeal the Faircloth amendment so that the city can build more affordable housing instead of the current practice where developers build luxury high rises that force the market rate to be high on so-called affordable housing units. There also needs to be more done about predatory lending. It is hard to get funds for a house and high or deceptive mortgage rates (or refinancing) can turn a dream home into a nightmare.

14) What policy and practice changes are needed for NYC government to ensure sufficient quality housing that actually is affordable for existing residents in Brooklyn neighborhoods?

As someone who has experienced homelessness, I understand first-hand the struggle we are faced with to serve our vulnerable neighbors. Therefore, I spent 10 years as a Board Trustee at the Sierra House, an organization that assists homeless mothers and their children, where I serve as the current President. I also assist other charities focused on the homeless. I will make sure that housing insecurities are properly



addressed and that we have real affordable housing in Brooklyn— starting with a reevaluation of the Area Median Income (AMI) by Housing and Urban Development so that it only includes the five boroughs – and extending to the repeal of the Faircloth Amendment. This way more city owned affordable housing can be built instead of all of the luxury apartments that only a few can afford.

15) What policies would you pass or enforce to ensure public housing/NYCHA repair, upkeep and security, and access to alternate housing and services when lacking essentials such as heat, gas and hot water? What is your position on “privatization” of public housing/NYCHA, and on City government sale of public housing “open areas” (outdoor seating & recreation plots) and air rights to private developers?

There is so much that needs to be done with NYCHA in order to protect it and their residents. First, we need to stop trying to privatize NYCHA, this is just a way to take over that property and will lead to more people being evicted and ending up homeless. They also need to keep their air rights. If the city wants to rent the air rights for the benefit of NYCHA so they become more financially self-sufficient then that is another story. The buildings need to be upgraded so that heat, water, and gas issues are no longer a major problem and that needs to happen ASAP.

16) Given the City’s Covid and post-Covid economic crisis, how would you approach your role in addressing the city’s carceral system, including the plan to close Rikers?

Closing Rikers is definitely a must. Our system needs to be more about rehabilitation not just incarceration. As the city discuss putting together relief packages, we need to ensure current and formerly incarcerated people get the resources they need too i.e. jobs, mental health services, housing, etc. because like it or not they are a part of this society too so we need to make sure there is a path to smoothly reintegrate within their communities and that includes proper access to the vaccine when it is distributed.

17) Describe your vision for public safety in New York City? What, if any, functions would you like to see removed from the police department? What agencies assume the functions removed from the NYPD?

I would like for them to Demilitarize the police. We also need to find a way to stop the 1033 program which allows local precincts to get surplus militarized equipment. Take away all of the gear that is meant to support our military. The citizens of our state are not enemy combatants and should not be treated that way. The money saved by demilitarizing the police can be used in other much needed community programs.

All new hires should have at least a two-year Associates degree in Criminal Justice. They should have to pass a test to get their license to serve (like nurses do or the bar exam for lawyers) which has to be renewed every four years via their community board of the neighborhood they serve and carry an insurance policy (like the malpractice insurance doctors carry). Once on the job they will be assigned to duties that do not require a weapon and will earn their weapon use after two years on the job training.



There should be a specialized squad consisting of mental health specialist who are dispatched for wellness checks, calls concerning the homeless, and other non-violent issues. Every issue doesn't require a weapon but if they encounter a situation that does then they can call for back-up.

18) Do you support changes to the ULURP process and to other NYC zoning mechanisms? If so, what specific changes do you support?

It is unfortunate that Borough Presidents' roles on ULURP are only advisory, I would like to see that changed. We also need to have ULURP dispense with allowing up-zoning at the expense of the current residents who are being displaced accordingly. We need to make sure that developers go through the community boards and that it is not merely viewed as a formality that they can skip, but a meaningful conversation where the community is informed on the developer's plans and everyone's voice is heard. The community boards need to have more power and have their decisions be binding. As a community board member, I see first-hand how our members work with the community and debate about what is best. It is hard when you see a consensus be reached only for their decision to be overruled and/or deemed nonbinding. Such a practice is how we end up with extremely tall luxury buildings in the middle of low-income neighborhoods where studio apartments for \$2,000 a month masquerade as affordable housing.

19) Do you have a plan to reduce and prevent homelessness in Brooklyn and NYC? Explain your plan.

We need housing and jobs. There are many who were unemployed before the pandemic and COVID-19 just made bad situations worst. We also need real affordable housing. So, as I mentioned previously, we need to start by reevaluating the AMI, repealing the Faircloth amendment, and provide access to mental health services before, during, and/or after a person is in danger of becoming homeless or is homeless and needs to be uplifted.