

# Dorchester Reporter

"The News and Values Around the Neighborhood"

## 2021 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

### Section 1: BACKGROUND

1. What is your name, age, place of birth and present address?

*Name: Tania Fernandes Anderson*

*Age: 42 Years Old*

*Born: Praia, Santiago, Cape Verde*

*Reisides: 40 Schuyler St, #1L, Roxbury, MA 02121*

2. What is your present occupation? Also, please note any past employment that may be relevant to your candidacy.

*Current:*

*Executive Director, Bowdoin and Geneva Main Streets*

*Past:*

*Theatre Executive Producer/Director Producer of Community Diversity Programs, Blood & Fashion Productions*

*Program Manager & Practitioner, Noah's Advocate Inc.*

*Family & Community Outreach Manager, Boston Public Schools*

*Career Advocate, Project Hope*

*HIV Counselor, Dimock Community Health Center*

*Child Wraparound Service Provider, Mass Alliance of Portuguese Speakers*

*Peer Team Leader, Roxbury Multi-Service Center*

3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.

*Graduate of John D. O'Bryant High School*

*3 Time Winner of Boston Herald Scholastic Writing Competition*

*Recipient of Citations of Merit from Mayor Ray Flynn and Mayor Tom Menino*

*Attended Springfield College*

4. Please list some of your affiliations with non-profits, civic associations and political groups.

*I have been involved in several non-profit groups and community organizations throughout my professional career, including Noah's Advocate, Inc., Noah's Advocate Productions, Project Hope, Dimock Community Health Center, the Mass Alliance of Portuguese Speakers, and the Roxbury Multi-Service Center. I have also partnered with*

*organizations like Children's Services of Roxbury and been a volunteer on the Fight for \$15 campaign.*

*The majority of my adult life has been spent as a human service provider, and I have worked with the organizations listed above to:*

- *facilitate needle exchange programs with sex workers*
- *provide support systems to women who had experienced domestic violence and homelessness*
- *aid individuals experiencing substance misuse in receiving the care they need*
- *provide mental health intensive care coordination for families*
- *help immigrant communities navigate the various agencies in the City of Boston and access essential services*
- *connect students and their guardians to the necessary resources offered through the Boston Public School System.*

5. What in your experience to date will most help you to be an effective leader?

*I will be an effective leader for District 7 because I have navigated resources and systems to overcome the struggles in my life, many of which are the same struggles that people in Roxbury, Dorchester, Fenway, and the South End are facing.*

*As someone who experienced homelessness as an adult, I know the consequences of skyrocketing living costs, and will fight for affordable housing to be built in our community.*

*As someone who spent her career providing essential human services in the healthcare space, I know the consequences that result from people not getting the treatment they need, and I will fight to make sure that everybody has access to quality, affordable healthcare, including mental healthcare and recovery services.*

*As a mother of 2 children and a foster mother to 17, I know how important it is for every child to get a world class education, and I will continue to be a champion for fully funding and improving our Boston Public Schools.*

*I am firmly committed to tackling the systemic inequalities and structural racism that has held our city and our community back, and I will be a champion for the working families that make up District 7 on the Boston City Council.*

6. What are the three accomplishments you're most proud of?

*Raising my two sons, Louis and Shakhr, and the 17 children to whom I was a long term foster parent to.*

*Starting my own small business and my own urban theatre production company in Dorchester, which have served as an incubator and outlet for Black and brown artists.*

*Giving back to my community and through my volunteer experience teaching ESOL with MAPS and Parent University, instructing parents in how to sew through ABCD Early Childhood Centers, organizing interfaith galas to bring people of different faith backgrounds together, uplifting communities through my street runway fashion shows, and standing up for working families as a volunteer on the Fight for \$15 campaign.*

7. Are you a member of a union?

*I am not currently a member of a union. However, I come from a Union Family. My grandmother was a member of UNITE HERE Local 26 for over 30 years.*

8. Please list any endorsements to date.

*State Representative Liz Miranda  
SEIU Local 509  
SEIU 32BJ  
UNITE HERE Local 26  
Greater Boston Building Trades  
Plasterers and Cement Masons Local 534*

## **Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS**

1. What is your party affiliation and how would you characterize your political ideology?

*I am a Democrat. I identify as a progressive, and I am committed to helping bring change to our City as City Councilor. We need to take bold action to create more affordable housing, provide every BPS student with a world class education regardless of their race, ethnicity, or zip code, and we need to ensure that quality healthcare is a right, not a privilege. With progressive action, we can take on the systemic inequality and structural racism that has held our community back, and build a better Boston in which all residents get to share in the prosperity.*

2. Please name up to three (and at least one) of your political role models? Please feel free to explain your choices.

*State Rep. Liz Miranda - I admire the way she has mobilized our voters in our community that too many other candidates ignore, and has been a champion for progressive causes on Beacon Hill. She is a hands-on politician who has prioritized outreach and constituent services to back up the policies that she has fought for. Rep. Miranda has always put our community first, and I love the efforts she has put forth on redistricting. I am honored to have her endorsement.*

*Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley - Congresswoman Pressley has done a magnificent job fighting for the progressive causes our community needs. I think she is truly representative of her constituents, and I strongly agree with her statement, "those who are closest to the pain should be the closest to the power." I was proud to take the Pressley Policy Pledge and receive the Pressley Policy Pledge Distinction from the Congresswoman.*

*Mayor Tom Menino - Mayor Menino did a tremendous job uniting our city and reaching out to every single resident and working to improve their lives. I admire his commitment to outreach and community governance. One of the proudest moments of my life was receiving an award from him in recognition of the work I did for the Roxbury Multi-service Center when I was a student at John D. O'Bryant High School.*

3. Are you in favor of term limits for the seat you are seeking? If so, how many terms?

*I think term limits on City Councilors could help facilitate new leadership in the City, and is definitely something that should be considered. However, we need to start with looking at Mayoral term limits before exploring term limits for the City Council.*

4. What would you do to increase voter turnout in the city of Boston? Do you favor same-day voter registration or lowering the voting age to 16? Do you favor mail-in voting?

*We must do everything in our power to ensure higher voter turnout in the City of Boston. We should implement the following: automatic voter registration, same day voter registration, online registration and ballot request, vote by mail, and lowering the voting age to 16 years old in municipal elections.*

5. Do you think that Boston should adopt a rank-choice voting system in upcoming election cycles?

Yes

### **Section 3: ISSUES & PRIORITIES**

1. What is your top priority if elected?

*My top priorities are affordable housing, education, and quality, affordable healthcare. These are all essential pillars of my goal to topple systemic inequalities in the City of Boston in pursuit of Social Justice.*

2. How will you approach the issue of gun violence in our communities?

*I believe in a holistic, restorative justice approach towards gun violence in the City of Boston, rather than pursuing failed broken-windows and mass incarceration tactics. We can combat gun violence in the City with upstream investments in things like housing, education, and healthcare. I also believe in empowering parents and families to advocate for their children's wellbeing and helping to facilitate a healthier, more positive relationship between our community and law enforcement. With this holistic approach, we will create a healthier community that supports its residents and provides them with the opportunities for success and the tools to pursue it, and end generations of cyclical poverty and violence.*

3. Is there a specific city agency you see as in need of urgent reform? If so, please explain.

*I believe we need massive reform to our Boston Public Schools. We need to do more to make sure that students, teachers, and parents have the resources and funding necessary for our children to succeed. It is our moral imperative to ensure that every child receives a world class education, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or zip code.*

4. What is your position on residency, i.e. requiring people hired by the municipal government to live in the city of Boston?

*I firmly believe that Boston Residents should be prioritized for jobs that are created and paid for by Boston Tax Payers. I do not support rolling back existing residency requirements.*

5. The city of Boston presently owns and manages the historic Strand Theater in Uphams Corner. How would you seek to program, market and utilize this asset?

*As an Artist who has put on performances like the annual Blood and Fashion Extravaganza at the Strand Theatre, I believe that performance spaces like the Strand are a tremendous community asset. I strongly support connecting theatre management with local non-profits and artist communities to ensure that they have access to the performance space. However, fostering an art community takes more than this. We must ensure that artists have access to things like quality art education through Boston Public Schools, affordable rehearsal and studio space as well as housing, adequate funding, and opportunities throughout the city to showcase their work, particularly for Black and brown artists.*

6. What is your position on vaccinations? Should students be required to be vaccinated for Covid-19 to attend school in Boston?

*I support vaccinations, and I believe that our City must do everything in its power to proactively reach out to residents and talk about vaccinations. In the long term, we must ensure that everybody in our city has access to quality, affordable healthcare, so all residents have access to essential public health information and healthcare.*

*I believe that the Covid Vaccination should be added to the list of required vaccinations for Boston Public Schools, and would require all students that are of age to receive the vaccination.*

7. Do you favor a return to an elected School Committee? Please explain.

*I support a return to an elected school committee. We need more community input into our BPS, and residents deserve to have their voices heard.*

8. Do you support the recent decision of the BPS and School Committee to alter the admission plan for the city's three exam schools?

*I think the decision was a step in the right direction, but the BPS and school committee need to do even more to ensure that all of our communities have access to our Exam schools. We cannot have the three elite exam schools underserve our Black and brown students and force them into lower performing schools. I strongly support considering factors beyond exam scores in the admissions process, and believe that reforming the exam itself to be fairer and more inclusive is also necessary.*

9. Do you support the citywide ballot question that would hand new budgetary powers to the City Council?

*Yes. We need more input from the City Council in the budgeting process to ensure that the voices and needs of all Bostonians are considered and addressed.*

10. The city of Boston is presently without a permanent police commissioner. What should the next mayor do to fill the position and what type of person should be selected to lead the BPD?

*We need a police commissioner that is focused on reform and is willing to make significant changes to the Boston Police Department. We need a nationwide search for a candidate, and we must hire somebody who is willing to listen to community input, consider alternative programs to police response like the H.E.A.R.T. program currently being piloted in Cambridge, and is willing to tackle the structural racism that has caused a breakdown in trust between the BPD and the communities it protects.*

11. Do you support the redevelopment of City Hall and City Hall Plaza?

*Yes, but any development needs to prioritize equity. If we are going to rebuild or redevelop City Hall in its current location, we must first consider what we are doing to increase public and private development in communities like Roxbury and Dorchester and prioritize those projects.*

12. What is your assessment of the Climate Ready Boston initiative conceived and executed to date by the Walsh administration? Is this

initiative a sufficient response to prepare for the anticipated climate change in coming years and decades? What else might you do to build climate resiliency in the city of Boston?

*I am pleased that the Walsh administration took steps towards addressing the realities of climate change with the Climate Ready Boston initiative, but the reality is that we must do a lot more. The City of Boston must be ready to capitalize on the anticipated passage of two infrastructure bills currently being debated at the federal level, and should use the funding we receive to do things like expand public transportation, improve our electrical and sewer infrastructure, and retrofit existing structures to be greener and more energy efficient. This will create thousands of jobs in the City of Boston, help correct environmental injustices that disproportionately impact Black and brown communities like Roxbury and Dorchester, and create a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable City.*

13. A millionaires tax is expected to be on the statewide ballot in 2022. How do you plan to vote?

*I support a millionaires tax. I will vote for it on the ballot and will use whatever public platform I have to advocate for its passage. It is an essential step to giving underserved communities like mine access to more resources for things like housing, education, and healthcare.*

14. Should gig workers be considered company employees, rather than independent contractors?

*Yes. We must end worker misclassification by companies such as Uber and Lyft. Their so-called 'gig workers' should be treated like employees, given benefits, and be allowed to organize and collectively bargain.*

15. A report commissioned by the Walsh administration found that just 1.2 percent of city contracts awarded between 2014-2018 were awarded to Black or Latino-owned businesses. What would you do to change that?

*As a City Councilor, I would use the hearing process to hold Agency heads accountable for their hiring practices. I would ask every administrator to disclose what percentage of the contracts they were awarding were going to Black or Latino-owned businesses and what their plan was to increase that number and make it more representative of Boston's diverse population. I would also ask them to set benchmarks for hitting improvement targets, and would follow up with them on their progress to these goals to ensure improved diversity in the awarding of City contracts.*

16. In 2018, the Walsh administration set a goal of creating 69,000 new units of housing in Boston by 2030. What is your assessment of this target — and what would your office do to balance growth with the concerns that many have about displacement in neighborhoods like Dorchester?

*Housing is personal to me. I worry about the people who built communities like mine into what they are today being gentrified out as our City experiences economic growth. Furthermore, as someone who experienced homelessness as an adult, I know the pressure that rising costs put on renters, and the terrifying situations people can find themselves in when they cannot afford to pay rent. I like that the Walsh Administration set an ambitious goal, and I firmly believe that we must increase the supply of housing. However, we have fallen behind on this goal, and we must make sure that we continue to aggressively pursue building more housing units using all of the tools available to the City Council. Furthermore, we must also make sure that we are building more affordable housing units and expanding rent-to-own programs, so that longtime residents of the city can afford to stay here, build their wealth, and not get pushed out through gentrification.*

17. What is your assessment of the Walsh administration's overall performance? Please offer a letter grade or pass/fail as part of your answer.

*I have the utmost respect for Mayor Walsh and the work he has done. The thing about him that I admire most is that he has been a champion for unions and for working families like mine. Working people need advocates like him, and I am thrilled that he has continued in public service as Secretary of Labor. I would certainly give him a passing grade. However, we cannot become complacent and see progress stagnate. I believe we have much work to do on housing affordability, access to health care, education, and social justice, which is why I got in the race for City Council.*

18. What is your assessment of the acting Mayor Kim Janey's performance since taking office in March 2021? Please offer a letter grade or pass/fail as part of your answer.

*Representation matters, and as a Black woman, it has been phenomenal to see Boston being led by somebody who looks like me and is from my neighborhood for the first time in its 400 year history. Kim Janey is a pioneer, and she will always have my respect for that. Furthermore, I believe that she did a wonderful job representing District 7 during her time on the City Council.*

19. Will you seek to expand or change the composition of the Zoning Board of Appeals? If so, how?

*I support reforming the ZBA to involve the City Council and community members more in our city's zoning decision making. I support a more accessible public input process and I believe more accountability and transparency measures are needed as well. Furthermore, we should re-evaluate our zoning code and explore a potential overhaul since it has not been comprehensively updated since 1965.*

20. When not on the campaign trail, how do you unwind?

*I enjoy art, fashion, and theater, and count myself blessed to have been a part of performances like Blood and Fashion and Wakandafest. They have been excellent outlets for cultural celebration, personal expression, and community building. However, nothing beats the opportunity to spend time with my family and children.*

21. If you were not a candidate, who would you support in this election for either Mayor or City Council?

*I have been impressed with many of the candidates in the races. In considering my upcoming decision at the ballot box, I am looking for a candidate who will fight for communities like mine. As somebody who immigrated to this Country at 10 years old, grew up in Public Housing, graduated from John D. O'Bryant High School, and has spent my life trying to give back to my community, I believe we need a candidate who will fight with integrity for working class families and Black and Brown communities.*

Thank you for participating in the Dorchester Reporter questionnaire. Please send the completed document as a PDF or WordDoc to [newseditor@dotnews.com](mailto:newseditor@dotnews.com) by Fri. Aug. 8, 2021.