

Dorchester Reporter

"The News and Values Around the Neighborhood"

2023 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: BACKGROUND

1. What is your name, age, place of birth and present address? Ann M. Walsh, 51, Dorchester, MA, 8 Butler St., Dorchester, MA 02124

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

I recently wrapped up eight years of leading an education non-profit called 1647 that worked with educators to build stronger relationships with students' families. I served as Policy Director and Chief of Staff to City Councilor At-Large John Connolly when he was chair of the Education Committee. All of my work over the past 30 years has been in education, youth development, and family engagement.

3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.

BA, summa cum laude, history & political science at Quinnipiac University EdM, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, focus on civic engagement of young people from historically marginalized communities The Washington Semester at The American University, intensive seminar on peace and conflict resolution studies

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

Volunteer softball coach with All Dorchester Sports & Leadership (ADSL), The Red Sox Foundation RBI Program, and The BASE Leadership Team member of The Paulist Center/St. Cecilia refugee resettlement support team (POWIR site) with Catholic Charities Former Board Chair of Lee Academy Pilot School (BPS) in Dorchester

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

I have 30 years of experience in leadership roles, from being a youth development program director to a City Council Chief of Staff to the Founding Director of a successful non-profit. In my work, I have often been in rooms where people have disagreements and I am comfortable facilitating discussions to identify problems and find shared solutions.

6. What are the three accomplishments you're most proud of? My greatest personal accomplishment by far is that I've raised two incredible young adults who make me proud everyday with their kindness, integrity, and strong sense of justice.

Professionally, I'm proud to have been selected to the Social Innovation Forum's 2020 Innovator Cohort as Founding Director of 1647 and that I was able to help my organization pivot and thrive through the changes in the education sector due to the COVID pandemic.

As a community leader, I'm proud to have brought together and coached a diverse group of athletes to play softball in ADSL, RBI, and the BASE.

After seven years of playing and learning together, they finally won their first-ever championship at the Mayor's Cup in 2022. It was such a testament to their love for each other and I was grateful to be a part of the journey with an incredible community of athletes and families.

7. Are you a member of a union? No

8. Please list any endorsements to date. I have been endorsed by former City Councilor At-Large John Connolly, longtime activist and community leader Lew Finfer, and the editorial board of the Boston Globe. I have also taken the Reproductive Equity Now City Champion Pledge.

Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS

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

I am a progressive Democrat who is focused on getting work done to improve the everyday lives of residents.

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

Madeleine Albright, former Ambassador to the UN and Secretary of State, who learned from her own experience as a refugee and spent her entire career speaking up for justice and human rights. Plus, one time my kids got to meet her and she was amazing with them!

Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the National Farmworkers Association, who for years led the movement to help workers, especially women, immigrants, and people of color, get better pay and workplace safety.

Samuel Adams, because the inscription on his statue across from City Hall reads, "Incorruptible and Fearless," which is what I aspire to be everyday.

3. Are you in favor of term limits for the seat you are seeking? If so, how many terms? No

4. What would you do to increase voter turnout in the city of Boston? I would spend more time in communities talking to voters to ensure they know how important their voices are in local government.

Do you favor same-day voter registration or lowering the voting age to 16? Yes to same-day registration and I would support lowering the voting age to 16 for municipal elections so that young people can impact the systems

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that are closest to their daily lives and so that they have experience voting before they graduate and possibly leave home.

Do you favor mail-in voting? Yes

Would you support combining municipal and state/federal elections into even numbered years to increase turnout in municipal elections? No. We need voters to have time and space to learn about their local races without the noise of federal and state campaigns drowning out municipal elections.

Section 3: ISSUES & PRIORITIES

1. What is your top priority if elected? I am focused on eliminating what I call the “Secret Knock” that keeps information that should be common knowledge instead only accessible to certain networks. As City Councilor, I will work to ensure that all District 3 residents have the opportunity to access a world class education, an affordable home in a safe neighborhood, an effective transit system, and a greener future, so that we not only survive, but thrive together in this great city.

2. How will you approach the issue of gun violence in our communities? While community policing and law enforcement are important pieces of the puzzle, crime reduction and public safety are not just the purview of the police. True public safety depends on the presence of opportunities, care, and connection for all of our residents. As to violent crime, I am a strong believer in the saying that, “Nothing stops a bullet like a job” (cite: Homeboy Industries in LA). I will focus on pathways to jobs for all, including for people with CORIs, and the expansion of enrichment programs for youth to build stronger relationships in our neighborhoods.

3. Is there a specific city agency you see as in need of urgent reform? If so, please explain. Yes, the Boston Public Schools. I have been raising kids in Boston for twenty years and the stress and frustration experienced by families in this city around education is unacceptable. In the sixteen years that my kids have been in schools, BPS has had nine superintendents; a turnover rate that has fostered distrust and stifled improvement. We have a current superintendent who has the experience, skills, and relationships needed to put the district on the right path, so we need to provide the political will and resources to support difficult processes and changes that will better serve our students in the long run. We need to push BPS leadership to share a clear vision for improvement that is informed by families, students, and staff who are in our schools everyday. The days of top-down plans that go nowhere need to end and innovation needs to come from collaboration that puts school communities at the center.

4. What is your position on residency, i.e. requiring people hired by the municipal government to live in the city of Boston? I believe that residency makes sense because when workers live in the community, they

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have a better understanding of residents' experiences and needs and can bring more ideas to the table from their own lives.

5. Do you favor a return to an elected School Committee? Please explain. The voters supported a ballot question to return to an elected school committee and I believe that we need to honor that result. As a councilor, I would advocate for a hybrid school committee, with members who are elected and others appointed by the mayor in order to bring in more voices while staving off some of the political problems that were present the last time the BSC was elected.

6. Boston doesn't have enough housing to meet the demand. Separately, the Wu administration wants to see a return of the city's population to 800,000. 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 and Mattapan? Everyone who wants to live in Boston should be able to find a safe and affordable place to call home. For decades, excessively restrictive, exclusionary zoning has prevented us from building sufficient housing. Boston must quickly move to reform our antiquated zoning code to instead encourage building all kinds of homes (multi-family, backyard cottages, mid-rise apartments, and more), both income-restricted and market rate. Increasing our housing stock is essential to prevent displacement, welcome new neighbors who want to move here, provide affordable options for kids who grew up here and seniors who want to downsize and stay, and to build climate resiliency by avoiding further suburban sprawl, minimizing commuting time, and investing locally in livable, sustainable neighborhoods. I will fight for higher levels of income-restricted units at lower AMI% benchmarks in large development projects, especially in neighborhoods at greatest risk of displacement.

7. What is your position on rent control? I support the rent stabilization plan sent by the City to Beacon Hill and would call on the state legislature to pass it so that tenants can have some relief while landlords are still able to keep up with rising costs and inflation.

8. What is your position on the reforms the Wu administration is undertaking, aimed at the zoning code and the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA)? I appreciate the mayor's vision to create a planning department that centers transparency in the Article 80 process and ensures community voices while emphasizing resilience, affordability, and equity as Boston grows. I agree wholeheartedly that we need an updated zoning code that provides predictability for neighbors and

developers so that every project, especially a small one, doesn't need to go through a variance process that adds to legal fees and increases the cost of building housing. I am hopeful that the City can meet the challenge of our housing crisis and will advocate for the new version of the agency to be present, transparent, and responsive to residents throughout design processes.

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9. What do you think are the lessons learned from the Covid pandemic, and what would you advocate to change in city health policy as a result of the lessons learned? The COVID pandemic showed us the power of neighbors and community when facing a crisis. People looked out for each other in those early days by shopping for elders, making masks, and staying home to protect each other. The mutual aid efforts that brought food to neighbors in need and created online communities to stave off isolation were powerful and came from the best of us. I would argue that our public health efforts should continue to be science-driven and focused on safety, even when the directives are difficult, and that doing more to connect residents to each other and to resources nearby would build on the lessons learned. I was impressed with the public testing infrastructure and mask, vaccine, and home test distribution systems that were set up by the city. I think that the city gained operational skills and knowledge that should help us be more prepared for the next crisis by having systems in place that can be implemented quickly as needed.

10. What is your assessment of the Wu administration's overall performance? Please offer a letter grade or pass/fail as part of your answer. B+ I appreciate Mayor Wu's commitment to fighting climate change and tackling difficult issues that have been kicked down the road for too long. There is always room to grow and I'm hopeful that she can get contracts finalized with labor unions and support stronger engagement with school communities around changes that are needed for BPS.

11. The Red Line and several commuter rail lines run through Dorchester and Mattapan. How will you advocate for better service and conditions on public transit? Boston has become increasingly gridlocked and car-dependent as we have seen the rapid decline in service and safety on the MBTA in recent years. We need to create a comprehensive plan to address transportation that includes safer street designs, multi-modal transportation options, and a reliable and safe transit system.

The current state of the MBTA is unacceptable and Boston politicians at all levels must work together to create a system that instead can be the centerpiece of our growing economy and a climate-resilient future. State level funding and regional transit initiatives are not within the City Council's control, but the Council can impact work on Beacon Hill by amplifying the experiences and needs of all Boston residents and our business community. We need a Boston-specific seat on the MBTA board and we need to design our streets and housing to center transit and create

pressure on the MBTA to meet the moment with us. For example, with the Fairmount commuter rail line, investments by the City on surrounding public property to properly plan and design station access are much needed. Better transitions from sidewalk to stations, better signage and wayfinding, as well as improved shelters for connecting buses are all on the short list.

12. What would you do to make Dorchester Avenue and Blue Hill Avenue better roadways?

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The city should make clear that our road designs will always prioritize moving people, not cars. For Blue Hill Ave. making bus service uniformly excellent is key to solving traffic, parking, and street safety problems while reducing reliance on cars. If buses become the fastest and most comfortable and reliable way to get around, many people currently driving will happily leave their car at home, or be able to consider letting go of owning one altogether. Deploying bus or bus/bike lanes everywhere possible, implementing transit signal priority (the City's signals can "talk" to the buses and make sure they never have to wait at a light), enhancing existing bus stops with appropriate shelters and benches, and bringing back late night service options would all improve transit markedly for current bus and bike users, while encouraging others to mode shift. For Dorchester Ave., buses and bikes should be prioritized as well, and we should focus on creating more outdoor spaces for gatherings and/or dining, traffic calming to make walking safer, and, with resident input, find new uses for vacant lots that will enhance the quality of life.

13. What are your plans to reorient our neighborhoods to center around pedestrians and bikers?

Every street in Boston should be safe for everyone who wants to use it: pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and drivers. Boston needs to increase BTD's capacity to implement Complete Streets and Vision Zero changes in all neighborhoods as quickly as possible. The City could work with youth and returning citizens to train up a new workforce into these roles. These efforts can include traffic calming, intersection and crossings redesign, sidewalk improvements, protected bike lanes, and better access system-wide to bike share stations. The City should also pilot alternative traffic enforcement, such as red light, speed, and bus lane cameras for first warnings, then ticketing, to change bad driving habits. Funding for much of this could come from earmarking mitigation funds from development.

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

Coaching softball is my happy place. When there isn't a game to coach, I love open-water swimming, walking on the Neponset Trail, and relaxing in my hammock.

Thank you for participating in the Dorchester Reporter questionnaire. Please send the completed document as a PDF or WordDoc to newseditor@dotnews.com by Friday, Aug. 18, 2023.

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