

# 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?

My name is Barry Lawton. I am 67 and was born at Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina. I reside with my two children, Asberry and Sarah Anne, at 22 Willis Street, Dorchester, Massachusetts.

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

I am currently a performing musician. I and a twenty-four-year career retired BPS educator and public servant.

3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.
  - a. AAS, Criminal Justice, BLS Boston University American History and Civilization
  - b. Graduate Studies Harvard Extension School, Program for Senior Executives in State Government, Public Leadership Credential.
  - c. JFK School of Government, Social Studies Curriculum Development Team,
  - d. Week-long resident studies in the Founders of U.S. Documents, Gordon College,
  - e. U.S. Holocaust Museum, Washington, D.C.
  - f. Lecturer, Boston Athenaeum.
4. Please list some of your affiliations with non-profits, civic associations, and political groups.
  - a. I have been a forty-one-year member of the Meeting House Civic Association. Asberry and Sarah Anne have also been members since adolescence. Future member of the Dorchester North Civic Association.
  - b. My non-profit affiliations include: Chair, All Dorchester Sports League, Board of Directors Member and Past Secretary, Colonel Daniel Marr Boys and Girls Club, Dorchester Day Celebrations Committee, Chair, Senior Salute. Dorchester Kiwanis Club.

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

Growing up in a household with my sisters, my parents always heavily nudged us toward excellence, etiquette, and service. My college fraternity, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc., groomed me to believe in "Culture for Service and Service to Humanity," shaping my public service voice, values, and vision.

My voice is expressed with oratory, composition, public policy advocacy, persistence, and music. My values reflect respect, compassion, and human progress for every resident in District 3 and the City of Boston.

I have served in senior management, as a legislative aide, and press secretary positions in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Massachusetts State Senate, and the Boston City Council.

I had the honor and energy to represent faculties for the Boston Teachers Union for hundreds of teachers at the Jeremiah Burke, East Boston, and Madison Park High Schools. I also served as a Boston Teachers Union representative on a school-site council.

I have been a successful track coach and volunteer coach for boy and girl competitors and students who sought supervised fitness training.

I have been a candidate for public office for nearly four decades, always running to provide better leadership, attention, and a new vision to harness our diversity, galvanize our voice and influence in city hall, demand reform, and hold public officials accountable for their actions or inaction.

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

Fatherhood, being a home-owner, and endeavoring to persevere in the struggle for a more representative and equitable government for the residents of District 3 and the City of Boston.

7. Are you a member of a union?

I am a current member of the Boston Teachers Union Retired Chapter, and past BTU AFSCME and NAGE Unions for nearly three decades.

8. Please list any endorsements to date.

Community and pending endorsements.

## Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS

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

Boston Municipal Elections are nonpartisan. While I am a lifelong Democrat, I seek this office to represent the interests of the residents of District 3, regardless of political party, cultural or racial origin, or age.

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

Hon. John F. Kennedy- My earliest and most impressionable introduction to politics came in the Era of Camelot, The New Frontier of eloquence, public service, and hope. I often quote his words, more likely Ted Sorenson's, to reflect heritage, future challenges, and civic strategies. While his legacy may be shrouded by controversy and tragedy, his persona was inspirational and unique.

Hon. Doris Bunte was as soft and tough as they come. Her guidance, compassion, and leadership set the standard for leadership and vision to uplift Boston and the Commonwealth residents for those needing help, politicians in need of nudging, and a most loving matriarch.

Hon. Richard T. Moore and his wife Joanne have been political mentors for nearly forty years. He covered the mechanics of governing and she, the practicality and common sense of humanity.

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

Yes, I favor term limits from three to four terms for district and at-large councilors totaling a maximum of twelve to sixteen years. For thirty-nine years, District 3 has been led by three city councilors, all of the same political ilk, ambivalent in serving all parts and people of the district, and resistant to sharing city resources, economic opportunities, and policy issues that do not reflect a consensus of the old and new District 3. While there is a benefit to having knowledge and experienced leadership, that leadership can also become complacent in keeping campaign promises, expanding their breadth of inclusion and equal opportunity and cultural and social tolerance for all.

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? Would you support combining municipal and state/federal elections into even-numbered years to increase turnout in municipal elections?

I would actively encourage voter registration, civic education, and participation as I have done over the past four decades with multiple non-profit and political action organizations. Additionally, I would reach out to new and current residents to become more civically engaged while simultaneously demonstrating the benefits of voter participation and unity and a purpose for all eligible voters to find common ground for a common agenda. I favor same-day registration for eligible voters. I would support lowering the voting to 16. As a high school educator, I witnessed many young people wanting to participate in politics but having little value or leverage to do so easily. Unlike their eligible non-voting relatives, they could serve as family leaders and role models to make voting an intergenerational culture.

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

1. What is your top priority if elected?

My top priority is to change the leadership and representation paradigm/model for all residents of District 3 and its neighborhoods by creating a sense of trust and confidence in the leadership of District 3 and the Boston City Council.

I will advocate for viable short and long-term solutions for our brothers and sisters trapped at Mass and Cass. I will support immediate action for rehabilitating The Long Island Housing and Treatment Center and temporary nautical transportation for extended inpatient care and housing. The challenged leadership of the city government has watched this problem fester for far too long, and the state has not been far behind. I am committed to offering solutions to the City Council and collaborating with the Wu Administration to seek greater state executive and legislative involvement with the issue. I will not support or be silent on the continued endurance of the South End, Dorchester, Roxbury, and South Boston, until it is resolved.

This leadership will prioritize the most challenging issues facing District 3, including increasing state aid, renegotiating the “Pilot Program,” which offers tax-exempt status to colleges and universities, public safety, violence prevention, safe and affordable housing, education, immigration, health and senior care, youth development, traffic enforcement, parking, infrastructure improvements and equity, clean energy, clean air, dogs parks, rodent control and tax breaks for

owner-occupied multi-family dwellings. Many challenges are interrelated and require a comprehensive view and commensurate political strategy.

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

I will approach the issue of gun violence by first listening to and supporting the people and groups most impacted by the violence. I will advocate for and support and seek to support the organizations dedicated to violence prevention trauma relief. I will advocate for a public information campaign preceding the summer season that highlights the unseen consequences of violence. Additionally, I will visit the schools regularly to educate young people on interacting with law enforcement and advocate for an auxiliary police force with specified duties within the schools and community centers.

I will emphatically inform those who treat our streets like the “Wild West” that they will find no quarter and have unified support in the community to root them out and hold them accountable for their violent acts. I discourage the culture of “do not snitch,” so everybody tells. See something, discreetly tell someone.

The long list of unsolved murders is intolerable and needs extraordinary attention. I will work with law enforcement on all fronts to give them the resources to do their job. I am frustrated with the continued “modus operandi “ of empathy, sympathy, and no plan.

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

I would advocate for urgent reform in the Boston Development and Planning Agency. This derivative of the Boston Redevelopment Authority needs to connect and respond to neighborhood and residents' concerns sufficiently. Additionally, the City Council has vicariously served as a conduit for developers prioritizing profits over quality-of-life issues diminished by their development. They have allowed developers to bait and switch civic organizations' residents and have created a community skepticism and mistrustful climate. Further, they have allowed a proliferation of rental properties that deplete the disposable income of far too many residents struggling to avoid homelessness or overcrowded housing units.

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

I fully support residency for qualified Bostonians. Far too much wealth leaves the city through employment and city procurement. I will work to match Bostonians to Boston jobs and business opportunities. All of my campaign signage and literature are union-produced and Boston-made. The city government must do more to retain wealth and talent in Boston.

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

Yes. The cracks in democracy are becoming longer and wider. The continuation of a non-elected school committee is an abomination to the practice and spirit of democracy. Nearly 8 out of 10 Bostonians voted for an elected school committee. Their will has been ignored with the results of eleven superintendents, five mayors, declining enrollment, underperforming schools, discipline disparities, and an ambiguous educational vision and philosophy at best.

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 many have about displacement in neighborhoods like Dorchester and Mattapan?

We cannot control market forces, but we can prepare our citizens to be able to cope with upward fluctuations. It is attainable with an increase in affordable housing and home ownership. I would advocate for innovative programs that subsidize that transient population. Over the past three decades, a free-for-all housing at-any-cost mentality has diminished the municipality.

I propose a temporary moratorium on dispensing city-owned land until the housing needs of District 3 residents are met through affordable public housing aid for first-time home-buyers with criteria determined by District 3, 4, and 7 residents. I encourage the city to require available parcels for housing developments and utilize dormant and unkept parcels. Additionally, I would curtail the use of CDC as purveyors and conduits for more rental properties and encourage citizen's housing cooperatives.

7. What is your position on rent control?

I support temporary rent stabilization for absentee and large landlords. I would not support or place a similar restriction on owner-occupied housing units of up to six. Additionally, I would support a means test for landlords who improve or upgrade rental units to allow for increased property value. Simultaneously, proceed with increasing private housing stock and more affordable public housing opportunities like Charlestown's 4.1 billion dollar project.

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 believe the administration is correct in reforming zoning code regulations to free up and incentivize the conversion of unutilized commercial space for residential use, with additional incentives for affordable housing below market rates.

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 need for preparation for future pandemics will be the greatest lesson learned. Most important is the ubiquitous education on preventative measures, and preventing the blatant racial disparities in access to the vaccine. We learned that incentivizing behavioral modification in the form of gift cards is a viable method to encourage compliance with health guidelines established by state and municipal health commissions. We also learned there is a greater need for mental health and trauma services caused by death, fear, isolation, cultural barriers, and access to affordable or subsidized health care.

Additionally, there should be contingency plans for public buildings to maintain unequivocal procedures to contain contamination and spread. Early judicial involvement might provide non-partisan oversight and enforcement for those without religious exemptions, and deescalate high tension and passion. Further, the meticulous compilation and evaluation of data on various aspects of the pandemic will further the cause of preparation.

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.

Compared to previous administrations, I give Mayor Wu a C+ and bonus points for breaking the leadership barrier for women in the City of Boston. Mayor Wu inherited numerous problems, some partly due to her and her colleagues' shared ambivalence and inaction on certain issues while on the city council. The previous administration's departure exposed a litany of structural crises that were glossed over, with the optical delusions of progress and deception. Unfortunately, Mayor Wu appears to have had limited knowledge of Boston, its people, and its neighborhoods before she arrived in 2009. Like her predecessors, she has hired many in her administration with similar indigenous issues. There has been progress in addressing some long-term issues, and her administration has been challenged in finding short-term solutions that address residents' concerns in District 3 and other communities. As a city councilor, I will offer my support to fill in her administration's dearth of knowledge on issues that have long plagued our neighborhoods and city as a whole and make suggestions on becoming a more effective and impactful leader. She has been more receptive to constituents' concerns overall but has not instilled confidence in her leadership among certain groups.

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?

I will continue my long-time efforts to hold the MBTA accountable for their poor service in neighborhoods across Boston and seek equitable and substantial resources to increase the use of mass transit, particularly on the Purple Line, by offering free transportation for Bostonians on that line to increase ridership. Additionally, I will refile legislation I filed in 1998 to address these deficiencies and conditions of the stations. Further, I will continue to advocate for safety measures applied in some parts of the city to District 3. Far too many disparities exist in terms of service and modernity. Additionally, I will highlight obstacles to equity and place political and public pressure on unresponsive officials. In other words, make a lot of noise on behalf of the residents of District 3.

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

I would advocate for more municipal parking lots for Boston residential parking to allow small businesses to broaden their customer base with additional short-term parking, and relieve the concern for street cleaning or other parking violations. I would return the five Pedestrian Safety sticks I lobbied for, which were granted



with the assistance of City Councilor Ayanna Pressley. I would advocate for speeding mitigators to slow down reckless drivers, and increase enforcement of traffic laws. I would explore the possibility of LRV connectors from the Orange Line up Seaver Street, to Blue Hill Avenue, Mattapan. I filed state legislation in 1998 to study and construct a modern transportation infrastructure in an area where public transportation was better a century ago. Blue Hill Avenue was once a thriving commercial center before the 1968 riots, unlike Dorchester Avenue, whose commercial districts are expanding, and have close proximity to the so-called rapid transit. Additionally, small businesses have lost revenue because of poor and unresponsive leadership.

In comparison, both roadways are distinctly unique, however, they share a common problem of being unresponsive to business concerns and unable to leverage the community voice

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

Our first priority is to deal with the gnarly traffic patterns and mitigate the impact of unhinged, inconsiderate drivers and parkers. If these rash changes occur, they must be made in tandem with stop lights for cyclists and sufficient signage and traffic enforcement.

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

I sing, eat, spend time with my children, and help my neighbors. I play golf and work out when time permits.

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 Friday, Aug. 18, 2023.