

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: Bridget Nee-Walsh

Born: Boston, MA

Age: 42

Address: 118 G St, Boston, MA, 02127

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

Ironworker, Ironworkers Local 7

Owner, Southie's Own Gift Shop and Babe Mannion's Irish Shoppe

3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.

High School: Archbishop Williams

College: BA, Montserrat College of Art

College (Study Abroad): Art Education Minor, Burren College of Art, County Clare, Ireland

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

I am a 15 year member of Ironworkers Local 7. I am currently in my second term as Recording Secretary and was the first woman elected to serve on Local 7's Executive Board.

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

I am running for City Council because Boston needs a champion for working families and leadership that is focused on what our city needs. My life experiences have informed me of the struggles that residents in the City of Boston face and the changes that our city must make.

As a proud member of Ironworkers Local 7 for the past 15 years, I have proudly fought for workers rights, better wages, and safe working

conditions alongside my union brothers and sisters. I will continue this fight for good jobs, wages, and benefits on the City Council.

As someone who grew up in Boston and has built two businesses here, I believe that we need a more livable city and must invest in things like affordable housing, public safety, and infrastructure.

As the primary caregiver to two elderly parents, including one with dementia, I know that we have to do better for our seniors and for the people that take care of them.

Lastly, as a single mother of a 5-year-old daughter, I believe that we must fully fund our Boston Public Schools, and ensure that every child, whether they are in an exam school or not, receives a world class education, regardless of race, ethnicity, or zip code.

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

I am proud to be the first woman to serve as an instructor in Ironworkers Local 7's apprenticeship program, and of being the first woman to be elected to my union's executive board. As a woman in the building trades, I am proud of the outreach efforts that I have made to other groups that have historically been underrepresented in unions like mine, and of the increasing numbers of women and people of color that we continue to see joining our apprenticeship program as a result.

I am proud that in addition to my work with the union, I am proud of the work I did to save up enough money and open and operate two small businesses: Southie's Own and Babe Mannion's Irish Shoppe.

Lastly, I am proud of the work that I am doing raising my 5-year-old daughter, Celia as a single mother. I am raising her to be a powerhouse, and I hope that in me she sees proof that women can do anything and that hard work pays off.

7. Are you a member of a union?

Yes. I am a card carrying member of Ironworkers Local 7.

8. Please list any endorsements to date.

*Greater Boston Building Trades
City Councilor Frank Baker
Ironworkers Local 7
Boston Firefighters Local 718
Boston Carmen's Union Local 589
SEIU Local 888
SEIU NAGE
IBEW Local 103
IBEW Local 2222*

*Plasterers and Cement Masons Local 534
Elevator Constructors Local 4
Heat and Frost Insulators Local 6
Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen Local 3
Sheet Metal Workers Local 17
Operating Engineers Local 4
Massachusetts and Northern New England Laborers' District Council
Laborers' Local 151
Laborers' Local 22
Laborers' Local 138
Roofers Local 33
Sprinklerfitters Local 550*

Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS

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

I am a proud Democrat. I believe in a Democratic Party that fights for organized labor and for working families.

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

Congressman Stephen Lynch - How could I not support my Local 7 brother!? I admire the work Congressman Lynch put in as president of our union, and the fact that he has constantly stood up for working families like mine in Congress. State Senator Nick Collins is another politician I admire a lot - he has always put his constituents first and has never forgotten where he came from. I also have the utmost respect for Councilor Frank Baker and the work he has done for our City, and I am honored to have his support in my race.

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

No. There are more important reforms that the City of Boston should pursue, such as fixing the BPDA to increase transparency and cut unnecessary red tape.

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?

I support increasing voter turnout in the City of Boston by allowing same-day voter registration, mail-in voting, and lowering the voting age to 16. I also support measures like online ballot requests, increasing in-person early vote sites, and automatic voter registration.

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

Yes. Voters in the city supported it overwhelmingly in 2020 when it was on the ballot, and it is a better electoral system that allows voters to have more input into their government.

Section 3: ISSUES & PRIORITIES

1. What is your top priority if elected?

My top priority is facilitating a more livable city for working families like mine. We need to make investments in affordable housing, better public schools, and public safety.

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

I believe that we need to hire more police officers as a way to combat the recent uptick in gun violence. Furthermore, we need to work to reestablish trust between the BPD and the community it protects. I support a return to community policing tactics that were successful in the 1990's, like increased foot patrols, community engagement, and stakeholder input.

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

I believe we need to reform our Boston Public Schools. Children who go to the three exam schools receive a phenomenal education, but the reality is that we are failing many students who do not go to those elite schools. That situation is simply unacceptable. Furthermore, I believe we need to do a better job with vocational education in the Boston Public Schools, and recognize that providing alternatives to college, such as union apprenticeship, would be tremendously beneficial for many students.

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

Residency requirements have been collectively bargained with the BPD and BFD, and those bargaining agreements must be respected. I am open to exploring changes to this policy, but it needs to be done in a way that is consistent with existing contracts, or done through the collective bargaining process itself.

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?

The Strand Theater is a tremendous asset for the City of Boston. I would like to connect management with local artist communities and educational institutions to make sure that stakeholders are taking advantage of the Strand, and push for better publication of the programming that is currently taking place there in order to help artists find their audience.

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 absent a medical reason, college students coming to Boston should be vaccinated as a requirement to attend school here.

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

Yes. An elected School Committee will allow more parent and community input into the BPS decision making process.

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 admission to the exam schools should be based on merit, and do not support the recent actions taken by the BPS and the School Committee. However, I believe that we must take a look at the exam process itself, and make the changes necessary in order to level the playing field and prevent wealthier students from having an unfair advantage over others.

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

I support handing new budget powers to the City Council. Doing so would create a more representative and inclusive budget and budget process. I strongly support new budgetary powers for the City Council.

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?

I support a nationwide search for a new BPD Commissioner. We must find a commissioner who is ready to listen to community input and make changes, while also keeping our city safe. We need a Commissioner who will help build morale amongst the BPD, which is at an all time low, and rebuild trust between residents and the police that protect them.

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

I think redeveloping City Hall and City Hall Plaza could be good for the City, and could create a lot of good paying jobs in the area if it is done properly. I believe the city should pursue this project.

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 happy that the Walsh Administration prepared the Climate Ready Boston Initiative. The challenge for the new administration and City Council will be to continue to turn the initiative into reality.

I believe that investments in green energy and infrastructure will not only create a cleaner, more livable city, but will also create thousands of good paying jobs for working class Bostonians. With the federal government focused on the passage of infrastructure legislation, the Boston City Council must be ready to partner with our federal delegation and ensure that our city gets the resources it needs to fund the projects that can help build a greener future for its residents.

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

The millionaires tax is a great way to pay for essential things like schools, infrastructure, housing, and public safety. I strongly support its passage.

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

We must combat worker misclassification in the City of Boston. So-called 'gig workers' should be properly classified as employees entitled to benefits, and should be allowed to organize and collectively bargain for better wages.

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?

I would use the City Council hearing process to ensure that agency heads are contracting out work to Black and Latino-owned businesses in a way that is representative of the diversity of our city. Furthermore, I would ensure that contracts have strong worker protections through Project Labor Agreements. Unions are one of the best tools we have in addressing the racial wealth gap, and PLAs will ensure that companies that respect unions and their members are able to compete for work on fair terms, rather than being squeezed out by a race to the bottom.

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?

As a single mother, I strongly support building more affordable housing units in Boston. We need to make sure that the working families that built this city are able to live here. I strongly support Mayor Walsh's goal, but I believe that we need to do more in order to ensure that we get there sooner. I believe that a better zoning and development process can help us achieve this, and by working with the BPDA we can fast track some much needed affordable development in the city.

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.

During his time in union leadership, in the State House, and in City Hall, Mayor Walsh has always stood up for workers, and for that he has my utmost respect. I am thrilled that he is now serving as the Secretary of Labor. I would give his administration high marks for sure.

However, he has left behind big shoes to fill, and I got into this race because I believe working families and organized labor need another ally in City Hall now that Marty has gone down to DC.

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.

Kim Janey has been a trailblazer as the first Black woman to lead our City, and she should be acknowledged as such. Her time in office has had some challenges, to be sure, but it is too early for me to evaluate her legacy via a letter grade. We will have to see what unfolds in the coming weeks and months.

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

I believe we need to reform the ZBA to allow for more transparency in the zoning process, more community involvement, and, most importantly, to make sure that the ZBA is upholding our needs and values. The current delays in housing construction are unacceptable, and we need to greenlight the construction of more affordable housing units in the city immediately.

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

I enjoy spending time with my 5-year-old daughter, Celia. Some of our favorite things to do are visiting Castle Island, swimming at Wolly's beach, and riding on the Swan Boats.

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

I would try to convince Secretary Walsh to leave DC and run for another term! I also really admire Councilor Frank Baker and the work he has done for the city. I believe that he has a balanced approach to governance, and has done a magnificent job with constituent service. I am honored to have his support in my race.

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