

2021 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: BACKGROUND

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

David Halbert
40
Cincinnati, Ohio
37 Senator Bolling Circle, Dorchester

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

Current full-time candidate
Former City Council staff member (Councilors Sam Yoon & John Tobin)
Former staff member for Governor Deval Patrick
Former Deputy Director of Community Affairs - Middlesex Sheriff's Office

3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.

Master of Public Administration - Northeastern University, School of Public Policy & Urban Affairs

B.A. - Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

· Program Fellowships:

[New Leaders Council, Boston](#)

[Emerging Leaders Program: University of Massachusetts Boston](#)

· Initiative for Diversity in Civic Leadership

· [Commonwealth Legislative Seminar](#)

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

Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council - Board Member
East Boston Main Streets - Board Member
East Boston Piers Advisory Committee - Board Member
Massachusetts Democratic State Committee - Member

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

My experience working on the City Council as a staff member and understanding this job from day one, combined with my personal background as a BPS father, a Black man in Boston, and someone who has been deeply involved in the civic life of this city for nearly 20 years.

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

1) Being a good husband and father. It is what motivates me in every other part of my life.

2) As a leader of the Boston chapter of the New Leaders Council, a national progressive leadership development program, I was deeply involved in early efforts to diversify the applicant pool & training cohort. This has led to increasingly inclusive classes and given networking & development opportunities to dynamic leaders like former Boston City Council candidate Lee Nave, Jr. & State Representative Tram Nguyen.

3) While working at the Middlesex Sheriff's Office I helped establish, and served as director of, the People of Color in Criminal Justice Conference, the only gathering of its kind in New England, focusing on the unique experiences, perspectives, and challenges of people of color who are public safety professionals.

7. Are you a member of a union?

I am not currently a member of a union, but was previously a member of the United Food & Commercial Workers while working at Stop & Shop during my high school and college years.

8. Please list any endorsements to date.

Labor:

Bricklayers & Allied Craftsmen Union Local 3
Massachusetts Nurses Association
North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters
United Auto Workers Region 9A

Elected Officials:

Sen. Joe Boncore
Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz
Sen. Sal DiDomenico
Sen. Eric Lesser
Rep. Nika Elugardo
Rep. Jack Patrick Lewis

Rep. Adrian Madaro
Rep. Steve Owens
Rep. Maria Robinson
Rep. Dan Ryan
Boston City Councilor Ricardo Arroyo
Suffolk County Register of Probate Felix D. Arroyo

Civic Organizations:

Boston Ward 4 Democratic Committee
Boston Ward 10 Democratic Committee
Boston Ward 15 Democratic Committee
Boston Ward 21 Democratic Committee
Jamaica Plain Progressives
Progressive West Roxbury/Roslindale
[Run for Something](#)
[Massachusetts Sierra Club](#)
[Sunrise Movement](#)

Community Leaders:

[Former State Rep. Charlotte Golar Richie, former 2013 Mayoral candidate](#)
[Alejandra St. Guillen, 2019 Boston City Council At-Large Candidate](#)
[Erica Mattison – Chair, MassBike](#)
[Diana Hwang, Founder and Executive Director of the Asian-American Women’s Political Initiative \(AAWPI\)](#)
[Benaree Wiley, Former CEO of The Partnership](#)
[Robbie Goldstein, Former Congressional Candidate \(MA-08\) & public health advocate](#)
[Rev. Dr. Gregory Groover, Pastor, Charles St. AME Church & Former Boston School Committee Chair](#)
[Gretchen Van Ness, Civil Rights Attorney & Activist, Former Candidate for State Representative](#)

Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS

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

I am a lifelong Democrat and a proud member of the Democratic State Committee. I am a progressive who understands how to work with others across the ideological spectrum.

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

Former Boston City Councilor At-Large Sam Yoon - As my former boss on the City Council Sam taught me that leading based on values means that you must

take risks, and that you will always sleep better at night - win or lose - if you know your decisions are based on your conscience.

Former State Representative Charlotte Golar Richie - I am proud to have the support of Charlotte and am inspired by her example of not just identifying issues in her former role as State Representative, but of taking the leap into city government to lead the Department of Neighborhood Development and actively work to solve them.

Former Governor Michael Dukakis - As a former student of Governor Dukakis in graduate school I saw his continued love of public service up close. His life has been an example over and over again of getting knocked down and then getting back up and finding new ways to give back, whether returning to office with a new outlook and approach after losing to Ed King or committing himself to the education of generations of public servants as a beloved faculty member at Northeastern following his Presidential campaign. He is a quintessential public servant and an incredible role model.

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

While I do not favor a hard, arbitrary cap on terms in office, I do generally think that between 8 - 12 years should be an adequate amount of time to effectively serve and implement policy as a City Councilor.

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 should permanently adopt early voting in municipal elections in Boston as a method of increasing overall voter turnout. I am in favor of both same day voter registration and mail-in voting. While I believe that we should lower the voting age to 16 in municipal elections, we must revamp the BPS civics curriculum to ensure younger voters are as informed as possible when making their choice.

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

Yes. I supported the statewide ballot initiative in 2020 to implement ranked choice voting for state and federal elections, and think it should be the electoral process in municipal elections as well.

Section 3: ISSUES & PRIORITIES

1. What is your top priority if elected?

Ensuring that Boston is able to address the ongoing impact of the pandemic on every part of city life, in a manner that prioritizes equity for all neighborhoods and residents.

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

We must approach the issue of gun violence from multiple directions. We must address it as a public safety issue by increasing the presence and amount of streetworkers, who can focus on hotspots and work with individuals on-the-ground. We must look at this as an economic issue and work to provide more employment opportunities - particularly those that can lead to real careers, like in skilled labor. We must also think of this in public health terms and provide greater access to trauma-informed services and mental health clinicians for those in communities who have been harmed or negatively impacted by gun violence in their communities.

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

While a quasi-public agency, I believe that the city would be better served by the separation of the BPDA into agencies responsible for economic development and planning, respectively. While both functions are critical to the successful future of the city, by having them under one roof economic development incentives appear to regularly overrun planning and the community voice in that process. This has led to a significant level of distrust of the process that is a very real obstacle towards building communities.

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

I do not believe that Boston needs a residency requirement for city employees. I think that the current piecemeal combination of different policies for different departments does more harm than good. Instead I would seek to give applicants for city jobs who are also verified Boston residents additional points in their application process - similar to the Veterans Preference for Civil Service positions.

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?

We should use the Strand as an arts incubator space where we provide working artists, students at all levels, and other groups that may not traditionally have access to a space of this size and caliber with the opportunity to hone their craft. In addition we should focus on attracting and presenting artists who reflect the

diverse cultures within Boston and whose art reflects those rich histories and perspectives. This should serve as both a means of engaging specific communities within the city, and also as a reliable cultural touchstone and exchange for those outside of these specific groups. The long-term goal should be to increase cross-cultural awareness and engagement throughout the city.

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

I support a vaccination requirement for all eligible students, in accordance with existing BPS vaccination regulations. As a father of a BPS student who is currently too young for a shot, I want to do everything I can to protect my daughter and students like her across the city from any additional exposure or risk.

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

I support a hybrid model for the School Committee. I believe that we can provide our communities and BPS families, like my own, with a strong, direct voice in the education of our children, while also preserving accountability for BPS operations and outcomes for both the Mayor and City Council through their respective appointees on the committee. Such a structure would also need to include a student member with full voting rights.

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?

Yes. I am on record in support of the changes to the admission policy for the exam schools. I also believe that we must continue to follow the data to determine both the long-term outcome of this policy change, and its impact on our student population as a whole, and make adjustments as necessary in the future.

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

Yes. I would like to see it taken further though and enable the Council to craft an independent budget that can then be negotiated and reconciled with the Mayor's.

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?

The next mayor must engage in a truly global search for the next police commissioner, rather than fall back on only promoting from within the

department. Whomever serves in this critical role they must have independence from the existing culture within the department in order to institute needed reforms and change. This individual must also be of the highest character and have a true, evidenced commitment to diversity, equity, & inclusion as a core component of their criminal justice philosophy - and be able to point to concrete examples that they have led.

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

Yes. Both City Hall and City Hall Plaza should be used to their fullest extent as inviting, activated spaces for everyone in the city to engage with and enjoy.

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?

The Climate Ready Boston program is a solid foundation for addressing the impact of climate change, but it can go further. I would like to see Madison Park Vocational Technical High School reimaged, with a goal of making it the nation's leading "green" vocational high school, and creating a regular cohort of skilled tradespeople with the technical ability to help build and retrofit the city in the most sustainable ways possible. In addition, I would like to see city purchasing focused on goods and services provided by environmentally responsible and forward thinking vendors. Finally I believe that we should work to see that the city employee pension fund is invested in sectors that are good vehicles providing a solid rate of return for our retirees, but also engaged in the most environmentally supportive and sustainable practices possible.

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

I will be voting to support the Fair Share Amendment, and will be working to encourage others to do the same any way that I can.

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

Yes. Gig workers should be considered employees, with the right to unionize and collectively bargain should they so choose.

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 Council's Post Audit and Oversight Committee to ask questions about what businesses are working with the city, who is leading them, and where our tax dollars are going, whether into our neighborhoods or outside the city. By using this function of the Council's authority we can reliably identify patterns and areas of concern, and make the necessary policy adjustments to ensure as level a playing field as possible.

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?

I believe that at the time the 69,000 unit goal was reasonable, given the context, but that we must reassess these plans in the wake of the impact of the pandemic. We must work with our partners in civic leadership across the city to identify those in vulnerable positions so their place in our neighborhoods can be preserved. I believe that we must engage in "smart density" in order to meet the needs of the housing crisis, but do so in a way that minimizes the disruption to neighborhoods. This means constructing larger buildings, after raising the Inclusionary Development Policy to a minimum of 20% of units being affordable, which are close to major transit hubs, and investing in transit infrastructure improvements such as a city-wide connected, protected network of bike lanes and changing major roadways to accommodate real bus rapid transit.

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 give the Walsh administration a "B". While there were positives in terms of bringing a new culture and certain operational improvements to City Hall, there were also a number of ideas that seemed short-sighted, such as the Grand Prix racing proposal or the bid for the Summer Olympics, and the continuation of the city's rampant income inequality.

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.

I give the Janey administration a "pass" as of right now. I do not believe that this administration has had enough time in office to give a full analysis and more nuanced grade. This is largely due to the fact that the previous administration left a fair amount of high-profile unfinished business that need resolution - such as the Patrick Rose scandal.

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

Not at this time. Instead I would seek to add my support to advancing the home rule petition for changes to the ZBA, created and led by Councilor Lydia Edwards, that is currently under consideration at the State House.

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

I like to spend time with my wife & daughters since those moments are few and far between these days. I also enjoy listening to podcasts; some favorites are The Watch, The Horse Race, The Bugle, and Still Processing.

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

I think that Councilor Mejia has brought a very different perspective to many of the conversations on the City Council and I would definitely support her receiving a second term to continue that work.