

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?

Enrique Pepen

26

Charlestown, MA

72 Cohasset Street, Roslindale

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

Past: Executive Director at Office of Neighborhood Services;
Jamaica Plain Liaison/Coordinator at City of Boston;
Constituent Services at Office of City Councilor Tito Jackson

3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.

I was raised in Boston and attended Boston Public Schools from kindergarten until 12th grade. After my senior year of high school, I received a full scholarship to Suffolk University, where I graduated cum laude with a degree in Law and Public Policy in 2019. In 2021, I began my Master's of Public Administration, which I finished this year.

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

- Latino Caucus Chair, Young Democrats of Massachusetts (Mar 2020 - Jun 2021)
- Northeast Regional Director, Young Democrats of America (Jul 2020 - Present)
- Co-Founder, Boston Young Latino Professionals (Nov 2018 - Present)
- Mentor, Minds Matter Boston (Sep 2020 - Present)

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

As Director of Neighborhood Services, solving problems is like second

nature. Whether it's putting up a traffic light or saving a dying tree, I know how to get it done. As City Councilor, I *will* get it done.

I've built valuable relationships with leadership and workers across City Hall and beyond. My knowledge, connections, and dedication will put me in the best position possible to be responsive to each and every request made by District 5 residents.

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

1. As ONS Liaison, standing against City Realty to stop an eviction in Jamaica Plain.
2. Being able to set up shop and resources for victims of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico and the refugees that arrived in Fall River. I spearheaded an initiative with Congressman Kennedy's office in collaboration with Senator Warren's office.
3. Working with Tito Jackson to extend MBTA youthpasses into the summertime.
4. Bonus, and my true number 1: Being a father to two kids and raising a family in the city I grew up in.

7. Are you a member of a union?

I am not personally, but multiple family members are members of Local 26.

8. Please list any endorsements to date.

- UNITEHere Local 26
- IBEW Local 103
- Bricklayers Local 3
- Fmr. Boston City Council Tito Jackson

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 sensible progressive policies that will move our city forward and keep our residents safe, while maintaining and constantly improving the basic city services that keep our city running every day. City Council isn't and shouldn't be about progressives vs moderates or liberals vs conservatives—it's about the everyday issues that affect our residents such as affordability, children and schools, our streets, our safety, and our environment.

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

Councilor Tito Jackson, Congressman Joe Kennedy, and Mayor Michelle Wu. These three leaders put their trust in me and gave me an opportunity to serve my community.

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

I am not in favor of term limits for 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? Would you support combining municipal and state/federal elections into even numbered years to increase turnout in municipal elections?

Increasing voter turnout is critically important. District 5 has an abysmally low turnout history. One of the ways we can increase turnout is to implement same-day voter registration, have city sponsored voting drives, and use our Office of Civic Engagement to strategically increase awareness in low-turnout communities.

I wholeheartedly support same-day voter registration. I am willing to explore lowering the voting age, but I have not yet taken a position. I fully support no-excuse mail-in voting. I am open to exploring combining municipal and state/federal elections into even numbered years.

Section 3: ISSUES & PRIORITIES

1. What is your top priority if elected?

Holding developers accountable and fighting for housing affordability.

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

The issues of public safety and violence require holistic solutions, which is

why I will expand diversionary and support programs for youth offenders, increase funding for community-led after school programming, and support nonprofits and violence intervention groups that are engaging with at-risk populations.

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

The BPDA. I am supportive of the Mayor's plan to reshape the agency.

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

The city should use every tool in the toolbox to fill in the urgent staffing gaps across City Departments, including waiving residency requirements when necessary.

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

I am fully supportive of an elected school committee. Voters made themselves extremely clear when they overwhelmingly cast their ballots in support of an elected school committee in the last mayoral election.

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?

Our goal should be to ensure the residents of District 5 are able to stay in District 5. We should also be focused on maintaining and creating affordable housing.

7. What is your position on rent control?

Rent prices are unsustainable for most of Boston's working families. Rent stabilization ensures that working people will not be priced out of their homes overnight while also adjusting for the rise in prices. In this moment when wages aren't rising at nearly the rate of housing prices, it is crucial to protect tenants.

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)?

Housing prices are rising faster than wages, leaving more families at risk of homelessness every day. More affordable housing means more housing security, which is why Boston must ensure that zoning favors Bostonians, not real estate developers.

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?

Covid forced our city to try new public health policies and provided us the opportunity to measure their impacts. We learned, for example, just how feasible telehealth can be, how important mental healthcare is, and we further confirmed that race and socioeconomic status are very real determinants in health outcomes. From these lessons, I propose that we

- healthcare more affordable and accessible via telehealth
- fund more community-based mental health programs
- put additional worker safety protections in place for frontline jobs
- address the housing and environmental practices that keep Boston segregated and threaten the health of communities of color

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.

Pass. Mayor Wu is taking chances and trying out exciting new things we haven't tried before. That takes courage. There's always room for improvement, and no elected official is perfect. As time goes by, I believe Mayor Wu will continue to improve.

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 have always been passionate about improving our public transit. It is unfair and discriminatory that our most diverse neighborhoods have our most unreliable transit. The MBTA makes it hard to get around our city. After college, I worked for Transportation for Mass and advocated for increased transit funding, including the bus lane pilot program on the Tobin Bridge.

The goal of transportation policy should be making it as easy as possible for Boston residents to travel without an automobile. Fewer cars means lower carbon emissions, fewer accidents with pedestrians and cyclists, and better air quality. It also means that there will be less traffic when people do need to drive. Towards that goal, I fully support expanding bus lanes in Mattapan.

As a City Councilor, I will support Mayor Wu's plan for fare-free transit, starting with the existing pilot programs and working to expand them.

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

We need to continue the City's Blue Hill Ave redesign proposal and work closely with residents and businesses to ensure BTM ends up making the best decision for our residents' safety.

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

Pedestrian safety is paramount. We need to slow down traffic, ensure our kids can safely navigate our streets without being hit by a car. We need to take a close look at areas that need speedbumps, stop signs, traffic lights, etc.

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

I like to unwind by spending time with my wife and two kids. Visiting the local libraries, visiting Ron's for ice cream, and relaxing in our local playgrounds and public parks.

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.