

# 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?

Kelly Bates. 51. Santa Monica, California, 43 Chittick Road, Hyde Park, MA 02136. Please only disclose neighborhood.

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

I currently serve as the President of Interaction Institute for Social Change, where I work to teach tools for collaboration and bridge-building to clients, public servants, and more. Previously, I was a founding member of Emerge Massachusetts where we recruited and trained women to run for office. As the Executive Director of the Access Strategies Fund, I raised \$1M to fund grassroots organizations to ensure an accurate count in the 2010 Census and draw equitable lines in the redistricting cycle. Additionally, I was the former Executive Director of the Massachusetts State-Wide Women’s Legislative Network where I led a coalition of over 50 women’s groups that successfully advocated for policies that benefited new mothers and prohibited sexual harassment in the workplace.

3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.

As someone who experienced hardships early in life, education was a struggle for me at times. My mother struggled with mental health issues and physical disabilities so I had to make my way without much parental support. I was a survivor of teen dating violence so for a brief time my grades suffered. After struggling to make it through high school, I graduated from the State University of New York at Albany, and ultimately graduated Phi Beta Kappa and received a full scholarship to Boston University Law School. After law school, I decided to dedicate my career to serving the most vulnerable. I worked to obtain \$13 million in state nutrition funding and health care benefits for thousands of low-income families working with the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. I also served as adjunct faculty at Northeastern Law School and at Tufts University, teaching civil rights law and public policy.

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

Founding board member of Emerge Massachusetts. Boston Ward 18 Democrats  
Member of the Boston NAACP and Higher Heights for America.

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

I have proven experience getting things done for our city including fighting for the libraries to stay open during budget cuts and passing policies that benefit parents, working families and low-income communities such as policies to reform rent so it is more affordable, provide nutrition benefits to families, ensure women can stay longer in the hospital after childbirth, and ensuring our Boston Public Schools are more equitable when I served on Mayor Menino's External Advisory Committee.

6. What are the three accomplishments you're most proud of? First, I was able to get anti-sexual harassment legislation passed in Massachusetts that was one of the first of its kind in the country. Secondly, I worked across neighborhoods to save each and every one of our libraries from closing. And third, getting regulations passed so that women can extend their hospital days after childbirth, which has helped parents and improved outcomes for babies.

7. Are you a member of a union? No. My grandmother was a staff bookkeeper at a union and taught me the value of unions for working people.

8. Please list any endorsements to date.

Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, MassNOW, Mass. Voters for Animals, District City Councilor Ricardo Arroyo, Former City Councilor At-Large Felix D Arroyo, State Senator Sonia Chang Diaz, Representative Liz Malia, Former Senator Warren Tolman, Former Boston NAACP Chapter Leader Michael Curry, Philanthropists and supporters of women candidates: Barbara Lee and Maria Jobin-Leeds, Community Leaders Suzanne Lee and Curdina Hill.

## **Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS**

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

I am a Progressive Democrat who builds bridges among all Boston neighborhoods and communities to work together to solve problems across differences.

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

I look up to leaders in social justice movements. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from the Civil Rights Movement. Gloria Steinem from the Women's Movement. Tarana Burke from the Me Too Movement. They are an example of effective leadership that comes from humility, persistence, non-violence, storytelling, and truth-telling. I admire them and the leaders and movements they work with.

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

Yes, I am in favor of term limits. It's important to have diverse and different leaders working to help the city evolve over time. I believe that having term limits leads to a better functioning democracy as it does not locate power in one person for too long. I believe term limits must not exceed 5 consecutive terms. This gives councilors enough time to get to know constituents, learn the ropes and make change but leave room for future leaders to run.

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 am in favor of all of the above and a city-wide holiday for the preliminary and general elections day to encourage voting.

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

I believe that we should adopt rank-choice voting in Boston so that voters have choices and don't see politics as a zero-sum game.

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

1. What is your top priority if elected?

Affordable housing is my top priority in office. People can no longer afford to live in the city they love, and there are changes that the City Council can enact to keep this city accessible for everyone. I believe we need to bring back rent control, double the IDP, and develop reliable pathways for affordable homeownership.

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

We must work to end violence in our streets and homes by giving people pathways out of poverty, combating racism, and addressing trauma. Many of the friends and family I grew up with didn't have a chance to leave their neighborhood or get an education because they had to worry about flying bullets

or sexual and domestic violence. I believe in bringing back the Boston Miracle, a program that funded community-led anti-violence services, street workers, and programming which drastically reduced crime in Boston.

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

We need to reform the Boston Planning and Development Agency. I support splitting it up into separate Planning and Development agencies and reforming it to be more community-representative, with dedicated seats for climate resilience and affordable housing filled. Developers should not be regulating themselves.

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

I support this policy. I believe that people who live in the city are invested in the city's future and their neighborhoods. We need ways to provide Boston residents with good jobs and this is one way to do it.

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 offer free programming for people of the community to enjoy that features music, dance, movies, and stories from diverse backgrounds. It should host educational panels and civic forums. It should be a cultural and civic location where people can gather and appreciate the arts and civic learning at no or low cost.

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

I believe that in order to keep staff, students, and families safe, that students should be required to get vaccinated against COVID-19 if it is available to them. We may need to consider online education options in the future if COVID-19 stays with us for those families that prefer that option or cannot get vaccinated

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

I support a fully elected school committee. I believe that the members of the school committee should be accountable to people in Boston rather than the Mayor, whoever it might be.

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?

Although I do not fully support the recent decision, I believe it is a step in the right direction. We need to work to make admissions to exam schools equitable and

fair for students. I would welcome opportunities to pilot the removal of testing from the admission process. We test our students too much, and it is not a fair assessment of their merit for entry to an exam school. Grades, academic potential, leadership ability, and community involvement are more reliable indicators of success in school and in life.

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

Yes, I support this. I believe in a balance of power. Allocating budgetary powers to the City Council will give voters more influence over city policy through their representatives and balance the power of the Mayor to create a more democratic government.

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?

It is a necessity that the next police commissioner is thoroughly vetted by the Mayor, City Council, and by the public. I believe in transparency. We should appoint someone who can garner trust across communities, who has a reputation and record of ethical leadership and community-based policing.

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

I do support the redevelopment of City Hall and City Hall Plaza. This renovation will add to public spaces for Bostonians and tourists to gather, to host events, and to provide shaded areas to escape summer heat.

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 think the Climate Ready Boston Initiative is a step in the right direction. Where it succeeds is creating frameworks to gather much needed information about the future effects of climate change. However, I think the plan can be improved by elevating concerns of the heat deserts in the City as well as include explicit plans for environmental justice. The plight of climate change will disproportionately affect low-income communities, coastal neighborhoods, and Black and Brown communities. We need to be explicit in protecting these communities and working on solutions now to prevent severe damage in the near and distant future.

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

I plan to support this tax. We need resources for the complex problems facing our city.

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

I believe that there should be a path towards employment for gig workers while maintaining options for independent contractors. Right now, too many people are victim to working in the gig economy without the benefits of employment such as insurance, sick leave, and more. However, the option for independent contractors is important to people who have disabilities, child rearing responsibilities, or other factors that might limit their ability to become full time employees. We have to fight for a safety net for these workers and try to maintain the flexibility that gig jobs often provide.

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 support increasing city contracts so that at least a third of contracts have to be awarded to Black or Latino-owned businesses. I would like to see that for women-owned businesses as well. We can do more direct recruitment of vendors, introduce them to larger companies who will work with them as subcontractors, and host city fairs to publicize their businesses.

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 think 69,000 new homes by 2030 is a strong and achievable goal although I would like us to do more . And we especially need more homes, single-family and multifamily, owner and renter, for low and moderate income people. Public resources to reduce the cost of new housing are scarce, and still, Boston is doing more than most. But the number of new homes affordable for people with moderate and low incomes is too small. 13,800 affordable owner and renter homes by 2030 is not enough to provide for the majority of our city, the people with moderate and low incomes who make the city work but are stretched thin and priced out of Boston. New homes for owners and renters should be prioritized ahead of market-rate housing in the City's plans and programs. We can end the tax give-aways to luxury developments, increase the linkage fee on luxury housing, increase to 33% the affordable units in market rate developments, and any new federal stimulus can add to the resources we need to address Boston's high housing prices.

Our city's growth is good. But it's best when everyone in our community can enjoy it. We need to steer the city to equitable outcomes, to inclusive growth. We need policies that prevent displacement and allow for people of all incomes to

live in Boston. Tenants are priced out of their apartments and would-be homeowners have to leave Boston to buy a home. I support tenant eviction protections and rent stabilization, and expanded first-time home buyer programs. Each prevents displacement. Along with free and expanded public transit, and raising the minimum wage, these policies are necessary to have balanced inclusive growth.

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.

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 believe Mayor Janey has succeeded as Acting Mayor. She is our first Black and woman Mayor in Boston, and took her term during a pandemic, a housing crisis, and an economic downfall. Although there are certainly areas for improvement, I believe she has been very effective.. I would give her an A.

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

Yes, answered above.

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

I love laughing with the family and running and biking in Boston streets and parks.

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

I prefer not to answer. It would be hard to choose. I am grateful to be a part of an election cycle with so many diverse candidates with different strengths. I have never seen anything like this in Boston, and I look forward to seeing the change this brings.

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 Fri. Aug. 8, 2021.