

Dorchester Reporter

"The News and Values Around the Neighborhood"

2021 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE : Leonard Lee

Section 1: BACKGROUND

1. What is your name, age, place of birth and present address?
Leonard Lee, age 63, born in Boston, MA , 11 Mather Street, Dorchester, 02124
2. What is your present occupation? Also, please note any past employment that may be relevant to your candidacy.
**Curator, Dillaway Thomas House, Roxbury Heritage State Park;
Manager, Melnea Cass Recreation Center, MA Dept. of Conservation & Recreation
All of my past employment is relevant to my candidacy.**

Throughout his 30 year career, Lee has been passionate about serving his community in the public, private and non-profit sectors. He worked as Director of the Division of Violence & Injury Prevention for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. There, Lee managed on a variety of community health issues including Suicide Prevention, Youth Violence Prevention, Sexual Assault, partner violence, Safe Spaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, intersex, asexual and/or allied (LGBTQIA+), Older Adult Falls Prevention, Sports and Recreation Injury Prevention.

Lee also served as former Deputy Commissioner of Public Health for the state of Connecticut, Executive Director of the ABCD Dorchester Neighborhood Service Center, Odwin Learning Center, and Executive Director of the Roxbury YMCA. He is also Commissioner on the City of Boston Parks Commission, the City of Boston Human Rights Commission and many other community boards.

He has an entrepreneurial spirit and has produced some of the biggest concerts and events in and around Boston including the Ebony Winter Gala and Beantown Jazz Festival. For fun and to support the environment, Lee keeps several beehives and has taught beekeeping at the Fowler Clark Epstein Farm in Mattapan. A ski instructor, Lee is an active member of the African American National Brotherhood of Skiers. He is also an ex- musician and an avid foodie.

3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.

Lee is a graduate of Johnson & Wales University and studied business management at Boston University.

**Johnson and Wales University; Providence, Rhode Island ,Awarded Bachelor of Arts Degree in Business Management and Marketing, 1982 AS Degree in Retail Merchandising
Meditation Works Inc- Professional Mediator
Boston University's School of Management
Institute for Non-profit Management & Leadership
Psychological first aid and Post Traumatic Stress Management
Community Based Response to Trauma Certification Program Safe
Sleep the Happiest Baby Certification Program
US Hispanic Street Gang train the trainer fellow
ServeSafe food handlers Certification**

Awards/Achievements

Recipient: Several Community, City and State Awards for Outstanding Service.

Boston Magazine, Boston Heroes, 2020

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

**Past and Present Boards and Commissions member of the following:
Commissioner on City of Boston Human Rights Commission Commissioner on City of Boston Parks Commission
Central Boston Elder Services
Roxbury Cultural District
Smile Pre-School, Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation, African American Federation, Street Peace, Big Brother Association of Greater Boston, Ella J. Baker house. Boston Children's Theater Director of Hall of Black Achievers-Bridgewater State University
Youth Violence Prevention Funders Learning Collaborative-Chair
Children's Trust Fund Shaken Baby Syndrome Statewide Task force
Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention Statewide task force
Omega Psi Phi, Inc Fraternity**

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

Throughout his 30+ year career, Lee has been passionate about serving his community in the public, private and non-profit sectors. More than 30 years of senior management experience in the non profit, community-based organizations and developing strategies for campaigns and programs.

Consistently achieve or exceed organizational goals and objectives; excellent interpersonal and communication skills at all levels of the organization with political and community leaders, and the public; a team leader and builder with a motivational management style. Build and maintain lasting community relationships by providing outstanding service and conscientious follow-up. Expertise includes: solid administrative and organizational management skills, service recruitment training and placement, community and youth development programs, public policy development, job training and workforce development, coalition builder, educational initiatives, community re-entry programs, fundraising development, budgeting and forecasting, special projects, train and mentor staff. Considered content expert on organizational development and management also in production and operations.

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

1. Being a dad to three children, all grown up now; being a foster dad; and being a lifelong Big Brother

2. Helping to develop and implement programs to curtail gang violence

3. Helping my sister Ruth Rollins to cope with the stress and grief of losing her son to homicide and seeing her empowered to initiate two nonprofits to help others cope with domestic and gun violence. (Operation Lipstick and We are Better Together)

7. Are you a member of a union? **No. I am a former member of the Boston City Hall Workers Union**

8. Please list any endorsements to date.

- **Steven Tompkins**, Sheriff of Suffolk County
- **Thelma Burns**, retired senior citizen advocate in Boston

- **Barbara Crichlow**, Vicinity Neighborhood Association, Neighborhood Council of Mattapan
- **Joseph Feaster, Esq.**, chair of Boston Urban League, Co-Chair of MBK Boston Advisory Council,)
- **Robert Lewis, Jr.**, founder of the Base
- **Shirley Shillingford**, President, Caribbean American Carnival Association of Boston, director of Shirley's food pantry
- **Richard Taylor**, community leader, and businessman,
- **Bill Walczak**, former CEO South End CHC, Pres/cofounder Codman Academy; prev VP Shawmut Constr., founder Codman Sq. Health Center, co-founder EMK Academy, MNN, CCHERS. Barr Fellow.
Bill Walczak said, "I have worked with Leonard Lee in support of families in our community for decades. Leonard is a true community leader who both understands the needs of community residents and how to work within Boston's power structure to make things happen. He will make an excellent city councilor, and I wholeheartedly endorse him."
- **Kenny Green**, MBTA police chief
- **Candance Burns**, community activist
- **Dorene Ward**, community activist, and educator
- **Jean McGuire**, former executive director of METCO, retired • **Dr. Harold May**, founder of Family Inc
- **Jimmy Dilday**, attorney
- **Ms. Beulah Providence**, founder/ president of the Caribbean Foundation of Boston
- **Keith Motley**, Ph.D, Consultant President/CEO, Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts
- **Horace Small**, Union of Minority Neighborhoods

Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS

1. What is your party affiliation and how would you characterize your political ideology? **Democrat. Grassroots Progressive.**

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

1. the late, great U.S. Rep. John Lewis because he made "good trouble."

2. Mel King because of his advocacy, his historic run for mayor of Boston, and his visionary leadership of the Rainbow Coalition 3. Shirley Chisolm because she was "unbought and unbossed."

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

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 favor same day registration and lowering the voting age to 16 because it could bring more young people into the democratic process. I favor mail-in voting.

To increase voter turnout, I support early automatic registration, Sunday voting and making Election Day a holiday.

5. Do you think that Boston should adopt a rank-choice voting system in upcoming election cycles? **No. It's too confusing.**

Section 3: ISSUES & PRIORITIES

1. What is your top priority if elected? **Public Safety and Bringing the city back better from Covid-19 through the lens of Equity.**

2. How will you approach the issue of gun violence in our communities? **I will work to make District 4 a safe place to live, work, and raise families by focusing on effective community-building and violence prevention strategies. I support gun buybacks and increased penalties on straw purchases of guns. As part of my experience, I have worked with neighborhood youth and funded and administered programs to deal with youth violence and gang prevention. I believe neighborhood associations must join together to walk the streets, engage with young people, push for youth employment, push for gun buybacks and encourage police officers to engage with young people on the ground, rather just on patrol.**

On police reform, I believe the racist culture of the police department must change to reflect more inclusion, transparency and accountability. We need to improve recruitment and training standards and require implicit bias training. Strengthen the Internal Affairs Oversight Panel and appoint new members of the Civilian Review Board. Police officers must remain residents of the city of Boston to foster better engagement with the neighborhoods. In addition, I support the policy to de-escalate and disengage in handling mental health calls.

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

The Boston Police Department. On police reform, I believe the racist culture of the police department must change to reflect more inclusion,

transparency and accountability. We need to improve recruitment and training standards and require implicit bias training.

Strengthen the Internal Affairs Oversight Panel and appoint new members of the Civilian Review Board. Police officers must remain residents of the city of Boston to foster better engagement with the neighborhoods. In addition, I support the policy to de-escalate and disengage in handling mental health calls.

4. What is your position on residency, i.e. requiring people hired by the municipal government to live in the city of Boston? **People who work in municipal government must live in the city they serve.**

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? **I would create a community advisory board to work with community based arts organizations, artists, residents and the city to develop a strategic vision to develop, program and market the Strand.**

6. What is your position on vaccinations? Should students be required to be vaccinated for Covid-19 to attend school in Boston? **All students should have the opportunity and the access to be vaccinated. Students need to be masked in school. Remote learning needs to be an option along with in class learning.**

7. Do you favor a return to an elected School Committee? Please explain. **Yes. The public needs to have more of a voice in selecting those with the power to influence and make policies that impact the education of our children.**

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 support the decision.**

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

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 recommend a local and nationwide search and inclusive process that would produce a qualified person of color to reflect the demographics of our city.**

11. Do you support the redevelopment of City Hall and City Hall Plaza? **Yes I support a redevelopment that brings City Hall closer to the people of Boston and reflects our diversity.**

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 initiative is a good start and we need more urgency. On the federal level, I support Senator Markey's THRIVE Act. This legislation offers a blueprint for economic and environmental justice. It features pathways to more than 15 million good paying union jobs, a goal of cutting climate pollution in half by 2030, and racial justice. I will also push for a state law that allows independent municipal retirement systems to divest from investments in the fossil fuel industry.

In addition, I will encourage District 4 to take advantage of new city programs such as the Boston Community Clean Air Grants which are funded through the Air Pollution Control Commission. These grants are designed to help residents, nonprofits, and businesses to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions. The program encourages partnerships through collaboration and joint proposals. This is part of the city's effort to support projects that will produce meaningful, measurable steps to reduce emissions that contribute to climate change and air pollution.

13. A millionaires tax is expected to be on the statewide ballot in 2022. How do you plan to vote? **Yes I support the "Millionaire's tax."**

14. Should gig workers be considered company employees, rather than independent contractors? **Their status depends on the hours they work, the extent to which they have benefits, their salary, and their desire and/or opportunity to establish their own business.**

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?

Accountability matters. As city councilor, I would push for a cabinet officer that has veto power to stop contracts from going forward without consideration for BIPOC businesses. Every city department would have to meet performance standards. If they fail to meet those standards their performance measures would suffer and their budgets would be frozen.

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?

Eighty percent of these units must be affordable. I will work with the City, State and developers to ensure that all residents of District 4 have access to affordable housing in communities of their choice.

Truly affordable housing is very difficult to achieve. I support Governor Baker's 1.8 billion dollar affordable housing bill to increase housing production and preserve affordable housing for low and

moderate income residents. To develop affordable housing we need to make better use of strategies including land grants, better use of government-owned parcels and subsidies. Truly affordable housing does not make any profit for developers and to make it work we need subsidies from the city state and federal government. We will work to secure those subsidies.

I also support linkage. Currently under linkage, the BPDA requires only 13% of any market-rate development's units to be for inclusionary units. Linkage is a policy of the Boston Planning and Development Agency BPDA (nee BRA) that allows developers of Seaport Condominiums and big money developments to give money to the BPDA for inclusionary units in return for not having any inclusionary units in their luxury buildings. They have to set aside more money to go along with the federal, state, and city subsidies, and increase the income mix for developments to 33 percent.

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. **Passing grade.**

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. **Passing grade.**

19. Will you seek to expand or change the composition of the Zoning Board of Appeals? If so, how? **I would expand the number of members to include more community representation. I would reduce the Mayor's influence.**

20. When not on the campaign trail, how do you unwind? **As an urban bee keeper, I look after my bee hives. And, I enjoy fishing. As a musician, I play my drums. I also like to take walks in Franklin Park.**

21. If you were not a candidate, who would you support in this election for either Mayor or City Council? **No comment.**

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

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