

# 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?**

Matthew Patton, 41, born in North Reading, Massachusetts. I currently live at 161 Savin Hill Ave with my wife Colleen, and two kids, Josephine and Jude.

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

I'm a workers' rights attorney helping people fight back against workplace discrimination, wage theft, and more. My current and recent litigation also includes a lawsuit against a so-called “crisis pregnancy center” run by anti-abortion activists on behalf of a woman who suffered grave harm because of one of these deceptive facilities. Further, I have spent my lifetime working to advance the values of equality and opportunity by uniting diverse communities working for and with the Special Olympics, former Governor Deval Patrick, Senator Elizabeth Warren, and John Barros.

**3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.**

I graduated from the Catholic University of America and, later, New England School of Law.

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

I am a member of the Columbia-Savin Hill Civic Association. Throughout my adult life, I have also volunteered with the Special Olympics International, including assisting in the launch of their campaign to end discrimination against individuals with intellectual disabilities—Spread the Word to End the Word.

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

I am an effective leader, in part, because of my background as a community organizer and my experience as a workers' rights attorney. I have spent my entire career standing up for what's right and advancing the values of equality and opportunity. Before practicing law, I worked for former Gov. Deval Patrick, Sen. Elizabeth Warren and John Barros. As a community organizer, I know how to create a cross-district coalition that zeros in on results.

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

1) **Launching Spread the Word to End the Word:** Working with Special Olympic athletes, I helped launch the campaign to raise awareness about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the R-word. This ongoing effort helps build

communities of inclusion for all people, including people with intellectual disabilities.

**2) Winning cases on behalf of workers:** As a workers' rights attorney, I fight tirelessly each day to ensure fair treatment in the workplace – from challenging unfair labor practices to advocating for improved working conditions, from representing workers in court to protect their Paid Family and Medical Leave rights to protecting workers' right to organize.

**3) Being father to my two children:** My daughter, Josephine, will soon start kindergarten in the Boston Public Schools and my son, Jude, is close behind. They've inspired me to run because every child and young person in Boston – across every District 3 neighborhood – deserves the resources needed to succeed in and out of the classroom.

#### **7. Are you a member of a union?**

No – but I fight for and alongside union members every day as a workers' rights attorney.

#### **8. Please list any endorsements to date.**

- Planned Parenthood Advocacy Fund of Massachusetts
- SEIU 888
- John Barros, former Chief of Economic Development, City of Boston
- Former Massachusetts Lt. Governor Tim Murray

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

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

I am a Democrat who believes deeply in the values of equality, opportunity, and inclusion.

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

- **John Barros:** Working for John, I learned the importance of uniting people and communities to advance common values - even if there are seemingly divergent interests. John showed that it's possible to lift up communities by creating broad-based coalitions.
- **Eunice Kennedy Shriver:** Working directly with Ms. Shriver through the Special Olympics, I watched her advocate for – and live by – the values of equity, inclusion, acceptance, and belonging. She was the founder of the Special Olympics and the sister of a former U.S. President – and yet, she would host summer camps in her backyard for people with intellectual disabilities.
- **Governor Deval Patrick and Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray:** My former bosses taught me the importance of demonstrating your values through your budget. It is not enough for an elected leader to believe in early childhood education; they must fully fund universal pre-K. It is not enough for an elected

leader to believe in reliable and safe public transit; they must fund improvements and maintenance on the MBTA.

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

Elections give voters the power to limit elected officials' terms. I don't believe further restrictions are necessary.

**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?**

We need to make voting more accessible for everyone, including working parents, low-wage workers, seniors, and so many other Bostonians. We must remove the artificial barriers to participating in our democratic process. This means implementing same-day voter registration, early voting, and mail-in voting; lowering the voting age to 16; and combining municipal with state/federal elections to increase participation and reduce city costs.

We must also make civic engagement possible across all neighborhoods; elected officials should engage community members in every corner of the city, even when it isn't an election year.

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

**1. What is your top priority if elected?**

We must build a more affordable, welcoming city for the next generation so that everyone in Boston has the opportunity to succeed. This means having access to a high-quality education, reasonably priced housing, and safe streets.

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

As a parent, I am constantly looking for what exit I would use or how I would get my kids to safety when I bring them to the grocery store, restaurants, movies, parks, or any public place. Gun violence is far too common – and gun safety measures are long overdue.

We know that illegal guns are an issue statewide and in our city; Boston police seized the largest number of firearms last year alone. First, we must ensure that we are doing everything we can to identify the stream that enables others to profit from violence on our streets. Specifically, we must call on state and federal partners to strengthen state and federal gun laws with checks and registration.

Second, we have to engage those that are at risk of gun violence. By investing in diversion programs, we can prevent young people from being caught up in

violence and the criminal legal system. Through after-school programs, job training, school counselors, and more, we can keep kids and communities safe.

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

Boston Public Schools needs urgent reform because, while our city currently provides some of the best education in the country, not every child has access to a high-quality education.

First, we need to fully fund universal pre-K. The data is clear that providing a child with high-quality early education sets them on a path to success. Universal pre-K also helps address the high cost of childcare, which is out of reach for too many Boston families.

Second, we must audit BPS. The City currently spends over \$31,000 per student – more than any other large U.S. city. Yet, not every child in Boston has access to a high-quality education. We have the resources to ensure that no barrier – whether it be a learning disability or English as a second language – stands in the way of a quality education, but we aren't strategically or thoughtfully deploying those resources to ensure equal opportunity for all children.

Third, we need to renovate and build new schools. Too many school buildings lack heating, cooling, and safe drinking water. Let's be clear: Every child – and every educator – deserves access to a safe, comfortable learning and working environment with heating and cooling systems, windows, and access to clean drinking water.

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

We must do more to make sure everyone who works in Boston *can* live in Boston. This means confronting the housing crisis head-on, but also investing in our infrastructure so that, as we increase access to more reasonably priced housing units, we are also improving street and transit infrastructure to absorb increased traffic and ensure access to open space. We also need to ensure that city workers' families are set up for success; that means ensuring that all children have access to high-quality education in our public schools.

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

At its core, this question is about accountability. Currently, the Mayor is 100% accountable for the schools and we should hold her, her administration, and the City Council accountable for delivering a high-quality education for every Boston child. We need to stop focusing on the structure for adults and instead focus on the structures for our kids—focusing on how to fully fund universal pre-K so that every child can have a pathway to success from an early age, focusing on how we spend current resources so that every child can have equitable education, and focusing on how to update our school buildings so that children and teachers have safe, comfortable learning and working environments.

**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?**

While we need to develop more housing to meet the needs of our growing city and lower the cost of housing, we cannot sacrifice the character of our neighborhoods in the process. To achieve this balance, the process must be driven by the community to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met. At the same time, government bureaucracy at the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) can't preclude development from happening – especially if development meets community needs.

**6. What is your position on rent control?**

Housing prices in Boston are out of control, and we need to find solutions that can be implemented now so that we can ensure everyone who works here can live here. Because the state legislature has already said it would not approve it, rent control is not one of those solutions. We must urgently do everything in the City's power to increase housing production and lower the cost of housing.

**7. 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)?**

The Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) is broken, and only works for the well-connected. Developers are leaving because the only way to get a project through is to pay someone who knows someone. At the same time, some developers agree to improve infrastructure that neighborhoods ask for and provide necessary funds to the BPDA – but those funds often disappear within the BPDA.

We need more transparency and accountability. As a city councilor, I will immediately call for an audit of the BPDA to ensure that when developers pay to improve infrastructure, those funds go where both the developer and community members agree.

**8. 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?**

First, I think we saw what many of us already know: that frontline workers like police, firefighters, health care workers, and public transit employees drive our economy. While it was heartwarming to see the support that these workers received, we need to do more to support them by ensuring that they are provided compensation and benefits to the level of the services that they provide our community.

Second, Boston faces intense health disparities along racial and socioeconomic lines. It is unjust and it is unacceptable that some residents have a life

expectancy of 92 years, while neighbors in other parts of the city can expect to live only 59 years. We must reduce barriers to health care so that everyone has access to high-quality health care.

**9. What is your assessment of the Wu administration's overall performance? Please offer a letter grade or pass/fail as part of your answer.**

I would give the Wu administration a pass. But I am seeking to join the legislative body tasked with shaping and informing the administration's agenda because I believe the City can and should better serve District 3.

Our district should be safe and welcoming for all people. That's why I'll fight – from day one – to ensure high-quality education for every student, to reduce the cost of housing by increasing housing production, and to improve our roads and open space. I'll also help advance a strategy to address the intersecting crises at Mass. and Cass, making sure that we prioritize public health, public safety, and quality of life in our neighborhoods.

**10. 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?**

While the City of Boston does not oversee the MBTA, its residents and workers are gravely impacted by the lack of investment and oversight of it. Too often, my kids are unable to get to their activities and I am late to work because the Red Line is unreliable. I would organize neighbors, business leaders, developers, UMass Boston, and other local stakeholders from District 3 to call for investments and improvements in the MBTA.

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

Our current infrastructure – whether Morrissey Boulevard, K-Circle, Dorchester Avenue, or Gallivan Boulevard – is overwhelmed and broken. Adding increased workload to this current infrastructure without investing in upgrades and improvements will only worsen the situation. As a candidate, I am not going to make promises that are continuously broken. For years, our communities have heard promises without results. That is why as your City Councilor, I will unite the broader community to push for necessary infrastructure improvements. To do this, I will convene a regular working group that includes the affected neighborhoods, civic associations, business leaders, developers, federal and state partners, and City agencies, including the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), so that we can all align on specific infrastructure improvements and actionable next steps.

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

Our neighborhoods must be accessible for all people – pedestrians, bikers, first responders, drivers, and public transit workers alike. At the same time, we need to ensure that roadways work for our small businesses. For example, the new bike lanes on Massachusetts Avenue across from Dorchester Brewing decrease

parking for the brewery, add to traffic, and slow the response time for first responders. We need to consider all perspectives when we set policies. In this case, one solution would be intertwining bike lanes with the sidewalk, instead of the street. This would allow pedestrians and bikers to travel safely, maintain parking that supports small businesses, and ensure first responders and public transit workers can do their jobs.

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

I love to bake with my kids. Our favorites? Homemade chocolate chip cookies and Joanne Chang's cinnamon rolls.

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 Friday, Aug. 18, 2023.