

## 2021 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

### Section 1: BACKGROUND

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

Marisa Luse, 47

Boston, Massachusetts

105 Harrishof Street, Boston, MA 02121

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

Campus Engagement and Collaborations Manager

Former co-founder and director, SCI Dorchester

Former Director of Community Programs & Site Planning, DotWell

Former, Director of Survivor Outreach Services, Louis D. Brown Peace Institute

Former, Program Director, Discover Roxbury

3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.

#### **Educational Background**

- BS in Political Science · Northeastern University
- Social Justice Mediation Certification · Social Justice Mediation Institute
- Certificate in Nonprofit Management & Leadership · BU School of Management & Leadership
- Executive Coaching Program · Social Innovation Forum
- Intensive Training Program · Commonwealth Seminar
- Community Champion · Vital Village Network

#### Achievements

- Excellence in Mentorship Award, Vital Village Network
- Community Engagement Award, Northeastern University
- SCI Idealist Award, Social Capital Inc.

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

- Boston Fireworks Taskforce, Member
- Boston Maternal Health Advisory Board, Member
- Boston Ward 12 Democratic Committee, Executive Committee/Member
- Boston-wide Women of Color in the Academy Advisory Committee, Member
- Center for Community Health, Research, and Service, Board Member
- Dorchester Avenue Task Force, member
- Garrison Trotter Neighborhood Association, Board Member
- Neighborhood Birth Center Advisory Committee, Member
- Roxbury Historical Society, Board Member
- Roxbury Roots Montessori, Inc., Board Member
- Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee (RSMPOC), Member

- RSMPOC Community Engagement - Sub Committee Chair
- Unitarian Universalist Urban Ministry, Board Member
- Women of Color in the Academy Planning Committee, Member
- Vital Village Network - Village Strategists of Boston (VSB), Founder and member
- Women's Service Club of Boston, Member

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

I am a trusted convener, strategic thinker, coalition-builder and relationship engagement expert. I have convened and activated spaces for activists, emerging leaders, families, residents, seniors, survivors, women, young people, etc. where I listen, learn and lean on both lived experience and expertise that prioritizes the needs and voices of the community and leads to long-term, sustainable solutions.

I have over 20+ years of being a dynamic and impactful non-profit leader who serves as a bridge between the community and local government and agencies to reform systems, improve experiences, and enhances the quality of life for all.

I am also trained and certified in social justice, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging concepts and practices, organizational development, civic leadership, family and community engagement and youth development that will draw on my trauma response, self-care and wellness expertise in order to be an effective and inclusive and approachable leader.

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

1. As an innovator, created tools and improve systems and processes for residents to get neighborly, stay informed, and become civically engaged in the Dorchester community: SCI Dorchester e-Blast, MyDorchester.org, Dorchester Neighborhood Guide and Connect the Dot public awareness campaign.
2. As a survivor of homicide victim and trauma response advocate, I organized Take Back Our Neighborhoods Peace March and Rally for two years to stand up against gun violence shortly after my brother, Herman Taylor III was killed, in collaboration with the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute establish a service providers network to create a state-wide homicide response protocol, and developed holistic healing space and wellness programs for survivors of homicide victims.
3. In response to the last year's fireworks activity, I established an online community to share experiences, to be a supportive network and to collectively mobilize. I also developed and administered a resident-led community survey to better understand who was setting off fireworks, motivations behind fireworks activity across the city and how it was impacting residents quality of life. This led to participating in Councilor Julia Mejia's record-breaking virtual forum, being appointed to the Boston Fireworks Task Force where we developed a public awareness campaign and and co-publishing an academic paper along with other researchers and city officials on fireworks activity and its environmental impacts.

7. Are you a member of a union? N/A

8. Please list any endorsements to date. N/A

## Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS

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

Democrat and Liberal

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

Michelle Obama

Congresswoman Maxine Waters

Stacy Abrams

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

No.

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?

My platform is solely focused on increasing civic empowerment across the district. In order to do so, we must address root causes to voter apathy and engagement. Voter turnout is low in District 7. In order for constituents to be more civically informed and engaged, it's important to activate the base through city-wide voter education and equitable information access. We know lower funding in services for District 7 is a direct result of low voter turnout in local elections. Constituents should also have basic knowledge on how city government works, how it impacts their lives, who their representatives are and how to hold them accountable; and how to get involved. As city councilor, I will make it a focus point that voter education is prioritized as a city initiative and made available across District 7. I will also work to ensure all constituents know how and where to access information about issues, events, resources and services in their neighborhood; establish information hubs equitably in each neighborhood, and work collaboratively with civic groups, community organizations and other community stakeholders to improve the coordination of information-sharing, language use and accessibility.

For most of my civic and professional life, I've worked alongside youth to address critical issues in our community. Working with Dorchester Youth Council, I've experienced first-hand the power and responsibility that young people have when given an opportunity and tools to lead with discernment and conviction. Young people are also impacted by the same quality of life issues that we are as adults, therefore I would be in favor of lowering the voter age.

I don't believe that there should be any obstacle to voting. I am in favor of same-voter registration and mail-in voting.

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

No. We need more people engaged in the process and showing up to the polls. Once improved, this might be a powerful next step.

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

1. What is your top priority if elected?

I have the track record of working with residents across the District to make their priorities a reality. Everyone deserves a safe and affordable place to call home, access to quality education, opportunities to earn a living wage, and joyful spaces to get neighborly, play, work, shop, eat, and worship.

My top priorities, if elected:

- bring consistency, responsiveness and transparency to uplift and advance the needs and quality of life of District 7 residents
- improve systems and processes to ensure that no one is doing this work alone, behind closed doors and without the voices mostly impacted in the room
- ensure all residents to have access to information about what's happening in our neighborhoods, know how to connect with opportunities resources and tools, as well as how to become more civically engaged shaping the district
- Develop a clear district-wide agenda on quality of life issues impacting physical, mental, and financial health of residents,
- Fight to reduce disparities in healthcare to ensure health equity for all residents, especially seniors, women, veterans, and youth
- Collaborate with youth and young adults to develop a comprehensive agenda to ensure that they have opportunities to afford to live, work, play and own.
- Tour neighborhoods regularly and convene roundtable discussions with residents to assess and discuss ways to improve our communities' environment

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

From shootings, murders, and stabbings, to theft, aggravated assaults, and domestic violence, Roxbury has 104% more crime than Boston overall with a high violent crime rate of 1,271/100k people. These stats do not reflect how income and health disparities negatively impact our neighborhoods, nor do they denote peace or refuge. As your city councilor, I will work to address these issues and invest in making substantive improvements: engaging street workers, city and community-based trauma response teams, etc to interrupt gang-related activity; cleaning and greening" blighted streetscapes where violence occurs; enhancing community policing and convening communities in high-crime areas to identify community-driven solutions.

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

I will fight to allocate funding to revolutionize existing tools for constituent engagement, by eliminating barriers to accessibility and utilization of 311. This evaluation will identify the main issues, provide key recommendations, and detail a list of actionable items to improve residents' experience, use of and access to those tools and resources. I will also ensure 311 has adequate funding to update its systems and enhance constituent outreach and marketing efforts.

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

It should be a consistent requirement for anyone who is working for the city of Boston to live in the city of Boston

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?

The Strand Theater is a historic and iconic landmark in the city of Boston. I would advocate for increased funding to addressing staffing, programmatic and marketing needs. I would also work with staff, community members and creatives to form a community advisory committee to ensure that the Strand has consistent representation acting on its behalf.

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

Vaccine hesitancy finds itself between two worlds of personal choice and moral responsibility. My choice came down to healthy family, healthy community. Wherever one may land on the issue, it is a real public health issue that requires listening, dialogue, and collective action.

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

Yes.

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.

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

Yes.

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?

There should be a hybrid hiring process for the next commissioner. The public should have a say on who the next commissioner for the Boston Police Department. A hiring committee should be formed consisting of city officials, police reform members, advocates, civic association leaders and residents who will co-design the hiring criteria, selection process and public engagement strategy.

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

Yes.

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?

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

In favor.

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

There are pros and cons to being a gig worker versus company employee. There is no one size fits all. However, it is the individual who ultimately decides to contract their services.

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?

We need bold, initial plan and firm commitment from city on this issue. I would listen to the recommendations of small businesses and entrepreneurs of color, advocates and organizations such as Black Economics Council of Massachusetts (BECMA), the Greater Boston Latino Network and Amplify

Latinx on best to address racial inequalities of city contracting and procurement practices of the city of Boston. I would ensure that these individuals and groups were consistently at the table of planning and implementation. I would also push for increasing the city goal from 25% to 40% as recommended by economic development advocates.

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.

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.

The Walsh administration made great progress on some key issues such as COVID and police reform, but lack transparency, responsive and consistency on critical issues across the city.

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.

Mayor Janey inherited a number of issues from the previous administration which makes it a challenge to fairly grade her overall performance. As mayor, she had been responsive and progressive on major issues impacting working, immigrant, and people of color communities.

Pass

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

Yes. I would increase the number of people of color on the board, including increasing the number of people representing a clusters of neighborhoods.

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

How I unwind is spending quality time with my family.

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

There is a significant number of people of color, male and female candidates seeking office, which is wonderful to see. Like many constituents, I am still educating myself on all the candidates.

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.