

2023 Questionnaire for City Council Candidates

Federico Muchnik

I How strongly do you support these issues before the city? #1 is high (for); #2 is moderate; #3 is low (against)

A. **More Accountable City Government:** Your support for greater transparency/accountability in the city.

a. 1 ~~2~~—~~3~~ _Circle the number that most represents your views.

b. How have you personally been involved in addressing this? Explain. **Today (July 31) I spoke to the City Council asking them precisely this: both they and the private sector (read: developers like WinnDevelopment) must be held accountable for their decisions. In the city’s case: ratifying the AHO, in the developers’ case, in implementing without restraint. Moreover, our videos have featured Dennis Carlone and Patty Nolan speaking clearly about what the AHO is and does and what its real world effects are.**

B. **Housing:** Your support for new AH0 (Affordable Housing Overlay) up-zoning amendment

a. ~~1~~—~~2~~ 3 _Circle the number that most represents your views.

b. How have you personally been involved to address this? Explain. **Again: our videos clearly demonstrate the damage the AHO is inflicting on the city. This is a story that “writes itself” because the right thing to do is so patently clear to us.**

C. **Transportation:** Your support for re-evaluating city’s bike lane/traffic/parking infrastructure and plans.

a. 1 ~~2~~—~~3~~ _Circle the number that most represents your views.

b. How have you personally been involved to address this? Explain. **For Joan Pickett we produced a 5 minute video documenting the sweeping changes around town with regard to bikes and bikers. We filmed a City of Cambridge public event outside Lesley’s Lunder Arts Center and captured both city reps and residents speaking out for and against what we were witnessing. The video was presented to the City Council, I believe, by Joan, then made public. My personal position on this: do not lose a sense of balance here. Many folks drive and need parking spaces to patronize Mass Ave. businesses. Less parking will cause businesses to atrophy as customers decide to stay away.**

D. **Environment:** Your support for keeping our mature trees (in schools, housing, parks, & other contexts)?

a. 1 ~~2~~—~~3~~ _Circle the number that most represents your views.

b. How have you personally been involved to address this? Explain. **On all of my projects, we are looking at nature. With regard to Walden Square, we know at least 7 mature trees will be destroyed if Winn gets its way. I recently filmed Quinton Z at Danehy pointing out no less than 10 mature tree stubs, all that was left after last year’s drought and subsequent irrigation system failures forced the city to destroy the dehydrated trees. I am also filming a documentary on life at Danehy over the course of four seasons, showing the park as a vital part of our community for just about every kind of outdoor activity imaginable. The film will be presented in early summer 2024.**

II. We are interested in how knowledgeable and active candidates are in city issues. (Short answer – 1-2 sentences)

- A. What is the one key problem/issue you want to achieve in City Council next term? **I would like to see the AHO revised or repealed.**

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions. **We took the story at Walden Square as a case-in-point where the AHO enables Winn to run roughshod over time tested democratic deliberative processes. The city has effectively legalized building at any height. All we have is public opinion which, in my opinion, can be very persuasive. That's why we make the films we make.**

- B. What City Council decision over the last term are you most supportive of? **The hiring of the new City Manager.**

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions. N/A

- C. What City Council decision were you most disappointed in the last Council term? **I am not fully aware of all the decisions made by the council during the last term so cannot comment. But if there was any movement towards codifying or reinforcing the AHO, I'd say that would qualify as disappointing.**

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions. **Our petition to "Stop The Slabs" at Walden Square will certainly help in drawing awareness to the AHO's misguided legislation. As of today, Aug. 1, we are approaching 450 signatures. The petition will be sent to Winn's executive offices as well as the City Council and the Affordable Housing Trust**

- D. What **City Staff decision** over the last Council term are you most supportive of? **While I am not aware of specific staff decisions in recent years, many years ago, as I was teaching a film workshop for the Area 4 Youth Center kids in Central Square (which led to a film: One Brick At A Time; Building People At An Inner City Youth Center), I witnessed the courage and resilience of many city employees who, on a daily basis, had to deal with staff shortages and limited resources as they mentored literally hundreds of kids. It was inspiring to be a part of that world and to document it.**

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions.

- E. What **City Staff decision** were you most disappointed in the last Council term? N/A

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions.

III. What Issues Help Define You? Highlight those core interests/goals for the 2024-6 Council and explain why. **While all the issues listed are interesting or important, I've selected only a few. A long conversation might help flesh out the entire list.**

 X More balance in commercial and residential needs. **With the lab building bubble about to burst, Cambridge will be well served by attending to the public's need for quality housing. Moreover: the city must protect existing residences from invasive business buildings. A good example of things gone wrong: the ActNano building on Bolton St. has an immense HVAC system emitting a constant dull roar straight into the front porches of a half dozen homes and homeowners who have simply given up taking care of their living spaces because of the**

constant droning sound. ActNano must be held accountable: they must invest in a quieter system or soundproof the existing one. Glad to supply video of this area.

More budget accountability

More engagement by residents. **Civics are a cornerstone of democracies. People engaged in their communities – call us localists – lead happier lives because they are connected to one another through their neighborhoods, businesses, associations, clubs, and workplaces. Instead of asking folks to come to city hall and sit in on council meetings, I’d launch a “get to know your neighbor” (hood), campaign asking that folks simply turn to the person living next door or up the street and say hi. It’s truly amazing what happens when we start acting locally. Taking the time to speak to the corner grocer, the mechanic, the woman walking her cairn terrier, the student coming home from class, etc... is not only deeply rewarding for one’s self, but it also affirms the other person’s role in the neighborhood. More to say on this...**

More equity in healthcare, environment, schooling, housing, and related issues. **Not sure what is meant by “equity” here, but if it means making the issues listed more available to all cultures, then of course, yes. The more diverse we are as a city, the more powerful we will be. If more cultures have access to healthcare, a clean living space, education, housing, and so on...we’ll be a city of the future.**

More transparency in Council and City decision-making

More prioritization of historic building reuse

More support for local businesses. **Mass Ave is one of the main economic lifelines for Cambridge’s astonishing business community. The “mall-ification”, the arrival of chain stores brings both good and bad (good: pharmacies. Bad: Dunkin + way too many banks). Cambridge First is a campaign I can understand. Can we go further? How to make storefront rentals affordable to mom-and-pop businesses that make Cambridge specific, particular, unique? Subsidies? Tax reform. Shop owners, local software developers, service providers, tradespeople, folks working as sole proprietors...these people are what makes a city thrive because each of these folks depends on the other and is a stakeholder at a personal level, not an employee working for a national franchise.**

A more multi-dimensional and resident-engaged city planning

A more inclusive environmental policy. **We can see that working class people – witness Walden Square / WinnDevelopment - will end up in “heat islands” and that the wealthy will be spared. To say “well, they’ve got Danehy Park” is to miss the point. By doubling the population density and warehousing folks in large slabs, the developer and the city are saying no to an inclusive environmental policy. No matter how much the developers tout the added greenspace they will bring to Walden Sq, a slab is a slab is a slab. The net loss of greenspace will be real. More on this...**

A more comprehensive transportation policy

Other (explain in 1-2 sentences)

IV. What incident or set of concerns got you interested in running for City Council? **Well, I think y'all know the answer to that one: I've been working on the Walden Square issue for almost two years – during which time I've learned a lot. My films – past and present – speak to the problems we see. Problems with solutions – only not the solutions the city has – in tandem with the private sector - proposed.**

Thank you!

Federico Muchnik