

2023 Questionnaire for City Council Candidates - Patty Nolan

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.

A hallmark of my work on the council, and on School Committee before, is a focus on transparency and accountability - I am known as the person who does her homework, brings data to the table for discussion and seeks benchmarking for all our work. And is willing to ask the questions publicly that should be answered publicly. One success for transparency this term was that as Finance Co-Chair with Councillor Carlone we held the first ever budget meetings for the council to discuss priorities in anticipation of the budget being developed. And we held a first ever meeting for the community to send their thoughts on the budget before the document was presented - since waiting until budget is presented is generally too late for meaningful input. For accountability, I have sponsored numerous successful policy orders - on our tree canopy, on spending for our school buildings, on getting proper study of the impact on businesses of the bike lane expansion and others - which are all about holding the council and the city accountable. When it became clear that BEUDO had not been properly communicated to the community, I built on the efforts of others who took on the task since city administration had failed, and worked with the city to host a meeting to gather input, deliver information and communicate about the proposal. There are many other examples of me pushing for greater openness, bringing people to the table, and following up.

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.

As a councillor, I have consistently expressed frustration over the amendment process and specifics. I asked the proponents for the rationale, the likely impact and the connections to ongoing affordable housing efforts - and not gotten good answers. Broadly, the process for this revision of the AHO is flawed and potentially damaging to the community. The original AHO had a five-year review process built in which would require the city to study the effects of the existing policy and come up with recommendations for amending the ordinance if necessary. I believe that these amendments are premature and that we have not had adequate time to assess the the AHO. Small adjustments could be appropriate - this major rewrite so soon after the first AHO caused some division feeds into people's cynicism about the council keeping its promise - of waiting for a review before a major rewrite. I also have made the case that the AHO is not the only manner in which we can address affordable housing production. I raised the isse that the corridors in the AHO amendments are not reflective of the commonly understood transportation corridors in the city and are not the same corridors listed in the Envision Cambridge plan. I will continue to advocate for zoning changes and building practices that favor affordable housing for low and middle income while also striving to create community and cohesion within our city – how it is now and how it can be in the future. This happens through central planning and careful consideration of individual areas, as we are doing in Alewife, so that we can match housing with other community needs and neighborhood uses and transform our city for the better and house more people. This proposal is a one-size-fits-all approach to zoning that doesn't take on the structural issues and sees height as a

silver bullet for a regional housing issue. I have been working with my colleagues to see if the proposal can be amended.

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.

Choosing a number for this question is difficult - since a 1 could mean strong support for installing MORE bike lanes and having congestion pricing, or it could mean support for stopping the installation and revisiting the current plan by reducing bike lanes and increasing parking. I marked 2 since I am in favor of re-evaluation how we implement our plans, and I fully support the installation of a network of bike lanes across the city. I am in favor of transitioning our city to a multi-modal city that recognizes that many people rely on cars and provides a safe way for those who cycle and walk to transit the city. The model Cambridge should aspire to become are the major cities in Europe including Paris, which recently reconfigured many roads. Like Cambridge, many European cities also have narrow streets, and are not grids. A challenging factor is that unlike European cities, our public transit is suboptimal. Which is why I am working to figure out if we can provide free trolley like service along some main corridors across the city - until the MBTA is able to provide frequent, reliable and affordable options. At the same time, I am working to help the city thoughtfully transition into one where cyclists, drivers and pedestrians all feel supported in our public ways.

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.

I have been the lead sponsor on a number of policy orders to protect and expand our tree canopy - from the irrigation problems at Danehy to working to ensure the second Miyawaki Forest was installed to meeting with the Committee on Public Planting to collaborate on how to improve their work. I worked with stakeholders to hold a public hearing on the Urban Forest Master Plan - which had not been done last term - and make sure that accountability is built into the city council's schedule. At the meeting, I invited people with deep expertise and knowledge about our urban canopy who are not usually at the table to be panelists - Charlie Teague, Elena Saporta, Committee on Planting, etc. The city staff has been working to address the concerns - and while there is still a ways to go, there is more attention to the issue of trees. We must counter the narrative that to work to protect trees is to care more about trees than housing or people. It is the opposite: to work to protect the urban tree canopy is to work FOR people, especially the most vulnerable populations in our city.

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?

Provide assistance to residents, businesses and organizations in the city to meet our climate goals. As leaders, the world is looking to places like Cambridge to see if we can decarbonize- our lives literally depend on us being able to do so soon. The UN Secy General explicitly stated that places like Cambridge must fully decarbonize by 2040 or sooner if the world is to be livable in 2050. the climate crisis is real, as we publicly declared more than a decade ago. Which means we should allocate the millions of dollars commensurate with the crisis and the need, along with dozens of advisors to make projects happen

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

I have been actively working to set up the mandates needed to ensure the directives are in place and the goals can be met. We are slowly changing the mindset of people from one that accepts plans with no accountability to one that demands results. And now we need to fund the transition adequately - and put money where the need is.

B. What City Council decision over the last term are you most supportive of?

The decision to hire Yi-An Huang as City Manager was incredibly important to enable Cambridge to move forward and achieve progress by opening up the city culture to be more responsive to our most talented staff, and more responsive to the council priorities like universal PreK and municipal broadband.

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

My role on the CM search committee and during council deliberations was key to ensuring that candidates would reflect the desires of the entire city, not only a subset, the equivalent of the old boy/town network that is part of the city, and not the whole. I worked tirelessly to vet the finalists, drill down into the actual accomplishments, approach to management and ability to work collaboratively in a complex sometimes contentious organization, and was effective at gathering support for the finalists and ultimately Mr. Huang.

C. What City Council decision were you most disappointed in the last Council term?

AHO amendments which have been forwarded to the full council with a favorable recommendation, in a 6-3 vote.

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

As explained above, I was and am disheartened by the process for amending the AHO. I am in favor of some amendments. I could support some additional height, especially along major corridors. The corridors in the current amendments are too broad brush and don't differentiate according to existing neighborhood scale. For example, part of Concord Avenue is single and two-family homes, compared to Mass. Avenue between Harvard and Porter Square where the overwhelming majority of parcels are much larger. Yet the two are treated the same under the corridor definition. And the way that anyone raising questions about the proposal is labeled as NIMBY and anti-housing feeds into the narrative of division and vilification - which is corrosive to collaboration and teamwork. I voted no on the favorable recommendation, I have asked for more information on the waitlists -how many are unhoused and in other dire situations like doubling or tripling up - so we could work to ensure safe housing for those most in need. I recognize waitlists have to follow certain rules and regulations - but we should have the data to better understand the needs.

D. What City Staff decision over the last Council term are you most supportive of?

The city staff, with a lot of community prodding and council pushing, accelerated action on the plan for universal preK

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

From the time I served on School Committee and this issue was studied - 12 (!) years ago, I have consistently advocated, asked uncomfortable questions about the delays in planning, and pushed hard. Persistent advocacy by many in the community, whose voices I tried always to include and uplift, has led to an actual plan for implementation and it is underway. I am glad to have continually advocated for acceleration of the plans - and am thrilled that under the current City Manager, and leadership from the council, that this initiative is finally being implemented more fully- as opposed to past piecemeal actions.

E. What City Staff decision were you most disappointed in the last Council term?

Communication about and implementation of the bike lanes.

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

The council passes policies, ordinances, and works on a range of issues. The council does not implement - or manage, since that is the role of the city staff. I support Vision Zero and the Cycling Safety Ordinance - since I believe the city will be better positioned if we become more like the European cities which are models of openness, and provide a place for all residents to thrive, including by supporting a network of safe transit across the city for pedestrians, and cyclists, and drivers. And the roads are public ways that should be configured for the best use. The communication on the CSO was non-existent - and at times misleading. I pushed hard to get the messaging on the changes to be transparent and accurate - that the safety improvements of expanding bike lanes including removing parking spots - a message that was not in any of the early communications. Now it is part of the communication - since I worked to ensure that. And the implementation has seen some missteps. The N. Mass. Ave. implementation initially included no handicapped spots and removed most meter spots - which was not good design or management. After pushback, by myself and others - some handicapped spots were added back, meter spots were added near Mass. Ave., and parking in the dedicated bus lane for certain hours were all changes made. Those changes should have been part of the initial design. The fact that we continue to see designs and implementation that is not backed up by data, for example, pedestrian traffic on Brattle Street, is frustrating and concerning.

III. What Issues Help Define You? Highlight those core interests/goals for the 2024-6 Council and explain why.

More balance in commercial and residential needs

More budget accountability

The council should have the same budget responsibility as the School Committee - and should monitor the use of funds and ensure effective use of public money. A prime example is the spending on the school on Vassal Lane - it is 40% more expensive on a per student basis than net zero schools built recently in Watertown. And all the consulting contracts we use should be used - or not done.

More engagement by residents

The city does a survey every year - which gives a good sense of how resident view the city. And we need to engage more residents - which I work on successfully last term by working to improve the city's outreach to all neighborhood associations. And the City Manager search under Vice Mayor Mallons leadership got a broad array of residents giving input.

More equity in healthcare, environment, schooling, housing, and related issues

There are often studies about inequities and needs - as with the achievement gap in our public schools - yet we need to take action - for example, success in a full algebra course for all middle schooler is achievable with known strategies and support for students. In other areas we are making some progress and need to build on programs that work. The continued disparities in wealth and income for low income residents and residents of color can be addressed with programs like Cambridge RISE which Mayor Siddiqui moved forward and Cambridge Promise which I joined in to support.

More transparency in Council and City decision-making

The council should be communicating partly through public hearings. This term the committee I chair, Health and Environment, has had more public hearings than any other committee except Ordinance, which is a committee of the whole. And the Finance Committee this term under my leadership has had more meetings than in the past.

More prioritization of historic building reuse

The council should support historic buildings, and recognize that development will happen - and the two are not incompatible.

More support for local businesses

As a former small business owner and someone who has worked to support local business, I recognize that Cambridge's identity is partly due to the small local businesses.

A more multi-dimensional and resident-engaged city planning

I have pushed for the council to be building on Envision - not ignoring it.

A more inclusive environmental policy

We need to be environmental leaders in action and outcomes - not just planning. And to do so, we need everyone at the table, which I have worked to do with the many initiatives we are considering on council

A more comprehensive transportation policy

The city needs to address the lack of a well functioning public transit system by working with all players to have frequent reliable transit options - using existing services and/or developing our own.

Other (explain in 1-2 sentences) -

not accepting money from developers, or cannabis operators. the appearance of a conflict is important - and too many councillors defend getting money from people with business before the council as minimal - which means if it is minimal, why not reject it, so as to rebuild trust among the general public about the council. Since at every level of government - local, state, national - residents are cynical and troubled about conflicts and true motives, we should do all we can to demonstrate our commitment to work for the whole.

IV. What incident or set of concerns got you interested in running for City Council?

My concern over how so many issues were unnecessarily made divisive and polarized led me to want to join the council and contribute to a more thoughtful, data-based approach to policy-making through collaboration and a focus on good governance. Two prime examples were how planning processes like Envision and the original affordable housing overlay proposal. Instead of bringing the city together to build on the work done by Envision, it was used to justify a few specific ideas like the AHO, without being transparent and more thoughtful in vetting the various recommendations in a comprehensive way. That type of approach continues to be my hallmark, and the ability to bring people together continues to inspire and motivate me. I am collaborative and focused on results and on including all residents in considering policies and ordinances.