

2023 Primary Candidate Questionnaire - New York City Council

Citizens Union - Local Candidates Committee

Dear candidate,

Congratulations on your decision to run for a seat on the New York City Council! Citizens Union appreciates your commitment to serving the public.

This form includes six sections with questions about your positions on various reform issues and your plans for the office:

- Serving constituents
- Elections and voting
- Campaign finance
- Oversight of City Hall
- Police accountability
- City Council rules
- There are also questions about the candidate's bio and the campaign

Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for office and to issue our preference for the June primary.

Read more about the method, principles, and criteria of the candidate evaluation process [here](#).

You can learn more about Citizens Union's policy agenda in our [issues section](#).

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If you wish to be considered, please submit this questionnaire by Tuesday, March 14, 2023.

We will need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process. Given time constraints and the limited capacity of a member-based organization, we may not be able to evaluate all contests or candidates in this election cycle.

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If you cannot complete the questionnaire in one sitting, **you can click Save** at the bottom of every page. Once you submit the questionnaire, you will receive a confirmation email with your responses. Citizens Union cannot see your answers unless you submit the form.

You can also download a blank questionnaire [here](#) and email it to us.

We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).

For any questions, please email candidates@citizensunion.org

We thank you very much for your response.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Candidate info

Name	Ursila Jung
Running for Council District number	<input type="text" value="1"/>
In which primary	<input type="text" value="Democratic"/>
Age	46
Education	Graduate school
Occupation	Private Investing

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Community Based organizations in my neighborhood.
Secretary, Community Education Council, District 3

Website www.ursilajung.com

Twitter #UrsilaforNY

Affirmations

Have you completed the required campaign finance filings?

Have you qualified to receive matching campaign finance funds from the CFB?

Are you willing to be interviewed by Citizens Union's Local Candidates Committee?

(Please note: interviews are prerequisites for Citizens Union's endorsements)

SERVING CONSTITUENTS

1. For most New Yorkers, the most important thing their Council Members do is provide constituent services. How have you run your office (or for non-incumbents, how would you run your office) to serve your community's needs? Please give specific examples. What are the major problems in your district that require constituent services?

The most important thing a Council Member can do is be available - no matter how small the need. I know that people like going to their council member for support on issues such as the Land Lease situation in Battery Park City and ranging to trash collection on their streets. It is important to respond to each issue with the same amount of gravitas and responsibility.

District 1 has a huge diversity of residents from the neighborhood of Tribeca to the NYCHA housing of the Lower East Side and the issues they have vary along with the residents. Major issues include: the land lease in BPC, homeless shelters in FiDi, Howard Hughes development in the Seaport and the proposed new jail in Chinatown.

3. What experience have you had, if any, with good government and reform issues? (e.g., voting and elections, campaign finance, ethics, police accountability, government transparency and oversight). If you've worked to advance these goals, we'd love to hear about it.

In my work with the Community Education Council, I have worked closely with the administration of the Dept of Education and the Chancellor for Education, David Banks. I have greatly appreciated his willingness to engage with the parent community and incorporate feedback into decisions being taken by his administration.

4. What are your top three campaign promises or goals? Feel free to reference an answer to another question on this form rather than restate it.

First: Public Safety and Sanitation

Second: High Quality Public Schools

Third: Neighborhood revitalization through investing in Small Businesses

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

5. How would you describe the relationship between the City Council and the New York City Board of Elections? How will you use (or have you used) your power as a Council Member to improve the operations of the NYC BOE?

In my recent (and first) interactions with the NYC Board of Elections I have been pleasantly surprised by how relatively easy a lot of the online process has been to register as a candidate. My liaison has also been very responsive. But the system is still heavily stacked against newcomers. And despite the fact that City Council is the only office on the ballot for this election, the websites have encountered glitches around deadlines with being able to update information.

While out and petitioning, it has been shocking to see how people are aware of an impending election. Elections for City Council MUST be moved to even-numbered years, both to boost turnout and to save me, the taxpayer, large sums of money, and also to reduce disruption to public schools which suffer while serving as voting locations.

I also strongly support term limits and open choice primaries so we can have a truly representative democracy.

Citizens Union recently [published a report](#) about moving New York City's municipal elections to even-numbered years, so they would align with presidential or gubernatorial elections, showing this change could boost voter turnout, diversify the electorate, and save money.

6. What is your position on that proposal to move New York City's municipal elections to even-numbered years and on the overall concept?

Short and easy answer: if we truly want widespread voter turnout this is absolutely essential.

However, in my personal interactions with some people, I am inclined to believe that there are vested interests who benefit from having suppressed numbers (of extreme voters only) showing up to vote and therefore prefer to keep the system as is.

7. Are you a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting? If so, how will you work to maintain this system and educate voters on how it works? If not, please elaborate on your position.

I support ranked choice voting. Simply stated, RCV gives voters a chance to express their candidate preferences in a meaningful way. The positive benefit has been shown in the increased voter turnout in the cities and/or states that have implemented it.

From a cost perspective, eliminating the need for run-offs is a big benefit. Some of this probably comes from the fact that voters do not feel they have to "waste" their vote in giving it to a candidate they do not like.

RCV also allows communities with a large diversity of backgrounds and minorities to have a greater say in the process.

8. New York City is one of few cities that maintains a closed primary system, in which only registered party members can vote in the election that typically decides who gets elected to office. Do you believe New York City should shift to a form of open primaries, allowing all registered voters to vote in the primary?

NYC has essentially been run as a single party system for many years now. To break away from this and be truly representative, we MUST shift to open primaries and allow all registered voters to vote in the primary and get a true reflection of the will of the people.

*** In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve elections and voting or increase competition in New York City's political system. Or, if you ran out of room in the fields above, you may continue your answers below.**

I have spend the past many months doing outreach to:

- 1) Inform people that there is an election coming up.
- 2) Encouraging and participating in voter registration
- 3) Prior to Feb 14, I tried to speak to people not registered as Democrats to switch their registration so that they could participate in the primary (there is no Republican or Independent candidate in our District)
- 4) I have a QR code on my palm cards which I have been handing out with a QR code to request an absentee ballot. The date for the election is 2 weeks after the closure of Private Schools for the summer break and on the last day of public schools when many parents are too occupied with the

logistics of their lives to be able to focus on voting for a local election.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

10. Individuals with business ties to city government and registered lobbyists can bypass their donation limits by “bundling” donations from other people, a loophole that can give insiders greater access to officeholders. Do you support banning bundling by people on the Doing Business with the City database?

No.
This is probably a very contradictory answer, but having just gone through an intense period of fundraising, I have found it very restrictive and hard to check every single box to be able to maximize the match from the CFB. Incumbents and experienced candidates have a huge advantage here with well developed data bases distinguishing each category of contribution needed. However, I would like to add a caveat that bundled donations would need careful oversight and scrutiny to ensure that the category of "Does work with the City" is clearly separated.

OVERSIGHT OF CITY HALL

In the last year, media reports have exposed potential ethical issues within City Hall concerning [conflicts of interest](#) among [top officials](#), the use of [public resources for private matters](#), [appointments](#) of friends and relatives, and [loosening transparency measures](#).

12. How do you see your role as a Council Member in ensuring high ethical behavior standards and effective ethics oversight and enforcement?

My own personal experience with the incumbent and the party machinery has been so negative that it influences how strongly I feel about ensuring high ethical standards at a local level and in interactions between candidates.

On a broader level, 2022 taught us that our democracy is a fragile thing and that protecting it has to be an active decision.

We must:

- ensure security of voting officials and spaces
- Ensure that there is no foreign interference
- Enact laws that ensure that false media narratives and social media posts are removed immediately
- Speed up vote counting
- Hold candidates and their campaigns accountable for frivolous and unfounded claims.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY AND REFORM

13. Who do you think should have the final say on discipline in the New York Police Department? How would you ensure that penalties imposed on police officers are commensurate with the gravity of their wrongdoing?

While it is important to recognize that the majority of transgressions committed by the NYPD are committed by a mere handful of officers, it is absolutely imperative that when needed, discipline measures be taken swiftly and decisively.

It is clear from historical data that the NYPD has historically, not done a good job of taking on this job itself and there needs to be oversight. However, The Civilian Review Board has also seen its recommendations overturned which means that the quickest and most cost effective way to deal with the issue is to pass legislation to strengthen the authority the CRB has over enforcing disciplinary measures.

14. What changes should be made to the independent oversight bodies to ensure they can effectively hold police officers who commit wrongdoing accountable (the Civilian Complaint Review Board, Office of the Inspector General for the NYPD, the Commission to Combat Police Corruption)?

Oversight bodies must function to ensure they are first and foremost independent. They must also be proactive and transparent. Legislation must be passed to give these bodies more "bite" by bestowing them with subpoena powers, investigative authority and resources and the ability to produce public reports.

These bodies must be allowed to make the final decisions on disciplining officers, establishing recruiting practices and setting up Chinese walls to minimize pay to play policies.

15. Under the 2021 police reform plan, the City committed to expanding programs that effectively shift responsibilities from the NYPD to other agencies in areas like mental health, homelessness outreach, school, and youth, while investing in alternative models for community-driven public safety, such as Cure Violence programs. What do you think about the progress of these efforts? How would you improve policing in the City's various communities?

NYC residents are caught in a strange place between wanting to see a safer city (which includes serious crime, petty crime as well as racism) and also wanting to see a reduced NYPD. While it is naïve to think that the NYPD is not needed, it is possible to have a reduced, yet more effective NYPD if we approach the safety issue from a multidisciplinary issue. Homelessness, unemployment and mental health, for example, are huge contributors to safety issues and are not within the expertise of the police department. In fact, to use the NYPD to address many of these issues is analogous to thinking everything is a nail because all we have is a hammer

*** In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve police accountability, oversight of the NYPD, and police-community relations. Or, if you ran out of room in the fields above, you may continue your answers below.**

To understand policing issues better, I have been attending meetings in my local police precincts for a while now.

CITY COUNCIL RULES

16. In December 2022, Speaker Adams proposed changes to the Rules of the City Council that would have potentially rolled back positive reforms related to bill drafting services and the power of members and committee chairpersons, among other issues. Although this proposal has been pulled, additional work is needed to make the Council a more democratic, effective, and open legislative body. What reforms would you like to see in the Rules of the City Council?

To an outsider, NY City Council looks like it is run as a near autocracy with the speaker wielding immense control. For the body to function as a true council, each member must carry more weight and be given greater responsibility.

I believe that committees must be given more ownership - and I say this from my own experience of attending numerous hearings at City Hall, where all members depart as soon as they have spoken. No respect given to people who take time out of their lives to give public testimony. And I can only assume this is because they feel they have so little control over the outcome of the committee.

PATH TO VICTORY

What is your win number (the number of votes needed to win this race)? 8500

What are your current fundraising numbers? What are your fundraising goals? \$ 32,000 raised. Expecting match of approx. \$88,000

How many individual donors do you have? 250

ADDITIONAL INFO

Please review your answers by clicking **PREVIEW ANSWERS** below.

At the bottom of the preview page, you can

- get a copy of your answers by clicking **PRINT**, and
- submit the questionnaire by clicking **SUBMIT**.

IF YOU DO NOT CLICK SUBMIT, WE WON'T RECEIVE YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE.

Once you click **SUBMIT**, you will receive a confirmation email. *If you don't see the email, please check*

your spam box.

If you have any further questions, you may contact us at candidates@citizensunion.org