



Candidate Questionnaire  
 Local Candidates Committee  
 Queens Borough President Election 2020

Citizens Union appreciates your response to the following questionnaire related to policy issues facing Queens Borough and our interest in reforming city and state government. **Please return the questionnaire to us as soon as possible, and no later than February 19th.** Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for the Queens Borough President special election, and to issue our preference for the Primary and endorsement for the General Election. Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.

If you seek our support, we will also need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process.

We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues.

We thank you very much for your response.

**Biographical Information**

Candidate Name: Elizabeth Crowley

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat Age: 42

Education: B.A., SUNY Fashion Institute of Technology; M.S. City and Regional Planning from Pratt Institute's School of Architecture.

Office Sought: Queens Borough President

Occupation/Employer: Former NYC Council Member

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: New York City Council, 2008 - 2017

Non-profit founder, Friends of the QNS; 2017

Non-profit founder, 21 in '21, a female-empowerment project for local politics

*(Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.)*

**Campaign Contact Information**

Campaign Manager Name: Robert Silverstein Additional Staff Contact: Samantha Ng

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**Affirmations**

Have you completed required campaign finance filings? YES / NO

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES / NO

*(Please note: interviews are prerequisites of being considered for Citizens Union endorsements.)*

11. How would you use the office of the borough president to impact city policies affecting the borough/what is the vision of your office?

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The Queens Borough President ('BP') position can be a highly effective office if used to its full potential. Its most effective powers are four-fold: 1) Advocacy, 2) Land zoning/re-use, 3) Community Board appointments, and 4) some grant-money budgeting. We need a BP who understands the full potential and limitations of these powers. I plan to use my BP advocacy powers to lobby for Queens' getting a fairer share in general from the NYC's budget, as our borough lags behind the other boroughs on almost every major issue -- transit funding, school funding, arts, infrastructure, healthcare funding, and on (we have done the research on this). For land zoning/re-use, I will push for not only more affordable housing across the borough, but in ways that will also advance our infrastructure/transit agenda. For community board appointments, I will push to get a broader representation/diverse participation. I will use the modest budget of the BP's office to fund worthy projects throughout the borough.

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12. If elected to the position, you will fill a vacancy for a 9-month period. The U.S. Census will be held during that time, and you would be sworn-in right in the middle of it. How would you work to ensure a complete and accurate count for the Borough of Queens?

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The biggest challenge in Queens is its diversity; it's well-known that ours is the most diverse county in the entire world. We need to make sure census-takers speak the languages necessary to reach these diverse populations. We need to encourage as many of these immigrant populations to fill out their census forms -- not an easy task in our current national political environment. As BP I will immediately hold a meeting with the best-qualified people on these issues to make sure Queens is NOT under-counted!

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13. Developers argue ULURP should be streamlined while community groups and advocates believe more opportunities for input should be provided or that voting thresholds should be changed for application approval. Others note that the ULURP process does not integrate the need to plan for post 9/11 security issues in development. What reforms to ULURP do you support?

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The 2019 ballot measure allowing more time for communities to review land-use proposal changes was passed by 76% of voters. Clearly, citizens want more time through their community boards to see how new development projects will impact their community, and I support their right to have that time. I am not accepting campaign contributions from developers so I am not on the side of "streamlining" ULURP in the way they intend, i.e., speeding up the process so they get their condos built faster. Regarding additional reforms to ULURP, the last ballot initiative

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was only passed last November; let's see how well that reform works before reviewing the process for additional reforms.

14. Queens has increasingly become a destination for new development projects, which has both economic potential and risks, like gentrification and rising cost of living. As the city explores rezoning plans across Queens, the Borough President has a key role in assessing and advising on such projects. What neighborhoods do you think should or should not be re-zoned? How would you balance the various demands around re-zoning plans?

My goals as a BP is to address multiple issues at once: transit, infrastructure, environment, and affordable housing. While I am giving a specific example instead of offering a broad response, this example typifies how I want to view the borough and my position as a whole: We have throughout Queens under-utilized freight lines that could be converted to light-rail passenger rail (they're MTA-owned). These rail lines stretch through dozens of neighborhoods, and so impact the entire borough. Adding more transit lines to our "transit deserts" give us the opportunity to open up more room add more affordable housing. It would also help get people out of their cars (helping the environment. We need a BP to think about the borough on a holistic level and not just encouraging, for example, growth in Long Island City while ignoring the rest of the borough. (should add that re-zoning plays a major and obvious role in addressing this ambitious plan.)

15. The borough presidents make recommendations to the mayor on capital projects as part of the budget process. All of the boroughs combined additionally receive 5 percent of the appropriations in the mayor's capital budget divided between the boroughs based on formulas related to land size and population. What would be your priorities for capital projects in the borough?

My priorities for capital funding referring back to my previous comments on the inequities Queens faces versus the other boroughs. The capital projects I want to address involve those inequities -- transit, education, the lack of enough/adequate trauma centers, and the unfair budgeting of our libraries top this list. Not all of the funding for all of these priorities come from the city budget -- many come from state and federal dollars -- but the budgeting process can be so complicated expect me to press for at least some capital funding on one to all of these inequities Queens faces. I have taken public stands on all of these issues already, from my nonprofit Friends of the QNS to my op-ed on Sept 24th in the New York Daily News about library budgeting. Regarding schools, the overcrowding issue continues to plague us, and Queens students get, and I already have a record on the council of securing money for schools (such as P.S. 290 in Ridgewood). There are many issues: The next Queens Borough President must fight the big fights for our borough.

16. The Amazon deal faced intense criticism from people and organizations both for and against it. What are your feelings around the Amazon deal and if you had been Queens Borough president when it was announced, how would you have responded?

Amazon's loss was regrettable; I was for the deal. But the neighbors who protested had a point. The area

infrastructure is already over-capacity, and the new employees would have put greater pressure on that.

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A keystone of my candidacy is to push for additional funding and resources for Queens to improve its infrastructure so that future Amazon deals 1) make sense for their area and 2) don't fall through.

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17. Borough presidents are charged with establishing a planning office that, among other functions, provides training and technical assistance to community boards on land use issues. The recently formed civic engagement commission is also tasked with providing professional assistance to community boards, in consultation and coordination with borough presidents. How would you use the office to help community boards fulfill their charter mandated responsibilities in providing feedback on land use proposals?

Clearly training and technical assistance to community boards would be crucial to a Crowley administration. As I seek to diversify the community boards, more technical assistance to new board members -- as well as refresher courses to some of the "old hands" -- will be crucial for the boards to be effective. Additionally, land-use laws are an ever-evolving issue, so we will have to host panel and group discussions and other kinds of training courses to make the rather dry subject of land-use law accessible to everyone involved.

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18. Borough presidents are charged with making hundreds of appointments. What criteria would you use for appointments to positions appointed by the borough president (the Panel on Educational Policy, City Planning Commission, community boards, etc.)? What processes would you put in place for advertising open positions and recruiting qualified candidates that represent the diversity of New York City?

Context is everything. A regular community board member must come from the community, and we are seeking to diversify our community boards as much as possible. Positions which require more specific skillsets will require us to find the best qualified candidates we can who 1) best represent the community, and 2) Do not have a conflict of interest relative to some professional or personal interest. Most likely we will carefully review the appointment criteria of the last two borough presidents, then update those criteria for 2020. We will review our advertising budget and choose the media outlets that have best chance of reaching the candidates we need.

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19. More specifically, Queens is the most diverse county in the United States, but recent data published by the Borough President's office (as mandated by the Charter) shows significant disparities between the borough's community boards and the demographics of the districts they represent. How would you address this issue to ensure community boards are reflecting their communities?

Greater efforts need to be made to reach out to our communities to let them know about these community boards. We need a wider diversity to truly reflect Queens, I think all the BP candidates have noted this. I would have my office work hard to reach out to the community through every media, mailings, and other efforts so Queens' democracy truly reflects its demographics.

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20. Borough presidents can hold hearings on any matter of public interest and are charged with establishing a borough-wide complaint program to report public complaints to better service delivery by agencies. How would you use these powers and the position of the office to amplify the concerns of borough residents? What issues might you focus on to improve agency performance or draw public attention to?

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The borough president's office exists in part for this very reason; borough-wide there is no one else to hear about what troubles voters if the issue isn't isolated to one council member's district. Holding public hearings and forming expert panels (or combinations therein) allow the BP, the public, and the media to understand a pressing need that is being ignored. The BP's office can have an enormous impact as a bully pulpit to spotlight a problem and I do intend to use hearings and the bully pulpit of the office to not only address my top priorities while in office (see your last question) but also to learn about what new, unaddressed issues exist in our community. Armed with information from the public and from experts, I can take Queens' concerns to state and local legislators to lobby on the people's behalf.

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21. The borough presidents have the authority to introduce legislation yet few borough presidents in recent years have exercised this authority. Would you utilize this power, and, if so, what legislation would you introduce?

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Please see my answer to question #15. I will be very active in terms of legislation that addresses the many inequities that Queens faces in comparison to the other boroughs of NYC. Once in office I will have review the legislative calendar and prioritize our agenda accordingly.

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**I. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS**

What are your top five campaign promises you are making to the voters during this campaign for this position?

If elected, Citizens Union will use these promises to evaluate your performance while in office, as well as to evaluate your candidacy in the future.

## TOP FIVE 2020 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS

1. My first priority is to recognize that, across multiple issues in Queens, **our borough does not get its fair share** of NYC funding and resources. We have almost as many people living in Queens as Brooklyn but they have twice the subway stops. Per-pupil spending in Queens is \$1,800 below city-wide average. Our arts funding compared to the other boroughs is dismal. The list is long. I will work to get Queens' fair share so we are no longer thought of as "the other borough."
2. A **comprehensive transit plan** is crucial. Not only are we fighting the MTA's redesign plan, we are dealing with long swaths of "transit desert" in our communities. Effective mass-transit IS a social-justice issue for the working class. I support the QNS train conversion, as well as the other freight-line train conversions, as I have said. And, as I said, these transit conversions allow us to impact things like the environment and affordable housing to reshape Queens.
3. Another top priority of ANY borough president should simply be **citizen outreach**. It's a boring topic but it's crucial to the success of democracy itself. We have to continue and expand upon what prior BP's have done to make the office accessible to everyone, rich or poor, English-speaking or not. Accountability, transparency, and outreach. By prioritizing this policy, we can learn, anticipate, and respond to the community's needs, setting other priorities for our citizens.
4. I want to help Queens maximize its full potential as a place for both **education and innovation**. This means finding innovative ways to connect the non-profit, private, and public sectors to our educational institutions, especially higher education. Queens has so much potential as a home for some of the best workers in the world, there's more we can do to maximize this. Re: education, I'll also monitor the K-12 programs to make sure the overcrowding issues we have faced there are resolved, and I want Queens' schools to get their fair share to improve education all-round.
5. Queens needs to **bolster its arts and cultural institutions**. We get some of the least funding for arts than all the other boroughs. We need more infrastructure, better funding, and help in so many ways, but we also need art, in our K-12 schools and in our civic life. A vibrant, diverse art world for a vibrant, diverse borough is important.

Please return to: Citizens Union, Local Candidates Committee, 299 Broadway, Suite 700 New York, NY 10007  
Via email to [candidates@citizensunion.org](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org) or fax to 212.227.0345 • Call us at 212-227-0342 with questions.