



Saturday, May 8, 2021

Citizens Union 2021 Candidate Questionnaire - Borough President

Dear Candidate,

Congratulations on your decision to run for the office of borough president! Citizens Union appreciates your commitment to serve the public.

In the following pages, you will find questions regarding your positions on various reform issues and your plans for office. The form includes sections on functions of the borough president office, planning and capital budget, and community boards and appointments.

Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for city offices, and to issue our preference for the June primary. Read more about the method, principles, and criteria of the candidate evaluation process [here](#).

**

If you wish to be considered, please submit the questionnaire by April 17 and no later than 48 before your interview.

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

**

If you cannot complete the questionnaire in one sitting, you can click Save and Continue Later at the bottom of every page.

Once you submit the questionnaire, you will receive a confirmation email with a PDF file containing your responses. Citizens Union will not be able to see your answers unless you submit the form. 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Your Info

Name

Kim Council

Seeking office:

Brooklyn Borough President

In which primary

Democratic

Age

49

Education

BA North Carolina Central University; MS Pratt

Occupation/Employer

Law Librarian / Sullivan & Cromwell

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Associate Minister, Berean Baptist Church;
Executive Director, Berean Community and Family Life Center
President, East New York Housing Development Corporation
Vice Chair, Local Development Corporation of East New York
State Senator Velmanette Montgomery's working group on Juvenile Justice
Alpha Kappa Alpha
Women of Faith Advocating Change
Church Women United
National Council of Negro Women
President, Law Librarian Association of Greater New York
NAACP

Website

kimcouncil4brooklyn.com

Twitter

KimC4BP

Facebook

KimC4BP

Affirmations

Have you completed the required campaign finance filings?

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KSL'.

THE OFFICE OF THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT

1. The role of borough presidents often changes depending on the office holder. How would you use the office of the borough president to impact city policies affecting the borough? What is the vision of your office?

I've seen a wealth of resources go to waste because people either don't know they exist, don't know they qualify, or they are too hard to navigate. As Borough President, I'll create a one-stop-shop to help people take advantage of all the programs that the city, state, and federal government have to offer. I'll prioritize a dedicated Small Business Resource Center to help our small businesses get back on their feet. I'll help people navigate the public school system, apply for government services, and buy – and stay in – their homes. I'll dispatch a Mobile Borough Hall to communities across Brooklyn to bring these resources to every neighborhood.

Also, our government doesn't allocate resources fairly. Whether it's school funding, transportation, healthcare, or anything else, we know who gets left behind. As Borough President, I will level the playing field. I'll track, map, and publicize where the

government spends our money to show the inequities. I'll identify investments that most effectively level the playing field and allocate my capital funds accordingly.

The best solutions to our problems come from the people working on the ground to make our communities better. As Borough President, I'll push for governance from the ground up where the government has let us down. I will support the community organizations who are doing the work that the government has failed to do. Whether the issue is education or zoning, we need to put an end to trickle-down governance, and embrace leadership from the bottom up.

We've had enough pageantry and politicking in Borough Hall. I'm a nonprofit executive who has built over 1,000 units of truly affordable housing, opened an affordable healthcare clinic, pioneered violence prevention programs, built affordable housing, managed youth and senior programs, and provided support services to small businesses. I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and get to work.

2. The city charter was recently amended to establish an independent, minimum budget for borough presidents. If elected, how will you utilize this new protected status to better serve your borough?

As I mentioned earlier, I'll transform Borough Hall into a one-stop-shop that helps people navigate government bureaucracy and access government and nonprofit assistance.

3. The charter requires borough presidents to directly engage with city agencies through a borough service cabinet to coordinate service delivery and issues. Yet the nature, level, and quality of collaboration with agencies varies. How will you work with city agencies to ensure meaningful engagement?

As I mentioned earlier, I'll transform Borough Hall into a one-stop-shop that helps people navigate government bureaucracy and access government and nonprofit assistance.

4. Do you support empowering borough presidents to require the appearance of borough commissioner of city agencies for the monthly interagency “cabinet” meetings led by the borough presidents?

Yes

5. 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?

There are two ways I would improve this process. The first is the Mobile Borough Hall I referenced above. I will eliminate the barrier of making people come to us, and instead reach them where they are. This gives people more of an opportunity to report concerns. But - more importantly it helps give us the context of what’s happening on the ground. We can see it in addition to hearing about it. If government agencies are struggling to meet their mandate and not willing to collaborate on improvements, then I’ll hold hearings to publicize their dysfunction and hold their feet to the fire – and not just city agencies, but state agencies as well. I’ll also use hearings to draw attention to poor policy making at all levels of government.

6. 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?

I think one of the reasons many Borough Presidents don’t often introduce legislation is that legislation needs buy-in from councilmembers in order to pass. I will certainly collaborate with councilmembers to draft legislation, but I recognize that councilmembers are more likely to dedicate themselves to passing a bill if they get full credit for it. Fundamentally, whether my name will appear on bills is going to come down to the personalities of my collaborators. I don’t need credit, I just want to get things done.

In terms of my areas of focus, I will start with a new program based on the Medical Service Corps, to staff community health clinics with students studying to become social workers. Some of these future social workers will provide counseling to patients, while others will assist patients with accessing services that will improve patients' health and overall wellbeing. I'm also interested in improving access to government services, translation equity, and reforming the Third Party Transfer program.

PLANNING AND CAPITAL BUDGET

7. 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. The pandemic has cast further disruption to the process. What reforms to ULURP do you support?

We need a fundamental overhaul to ULURP that gives communities input into the planning process from the very beginning, long before the current ULURP process begins. We also need community-wide rezonings that are truly community-driven, coupled with changes in the zoning code to specifically mandate affordable housing in new as-of-right developments. Developers shouldn't have to go through the ULURP process every time they want to build something -- we need more as-of-right development that benefits the surrounding community.

8. 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 priority is to level the playing field. For too long, some communities have received outsized investments while others haven't gotten their fair share. Here are some of the areas I'll be particularly focused (to be clear, this is just a starting point):

Healthcare infrastructure. Brooklyn has lost more than a quarter of its hospitals in the past twenty years, and as hospitals cut back on services they disproportionately reduce or shut down maternity wards and pediatric ICUs. I'll look at the data to see where healthcare infrastructure investments are most needed and encourage the mayor to reinvest in our healthcare infrastructure. In particular, pediatric ICUs are a huge problem in Brooklyn – they are located entirely in central Brooklyn with not a single pediatric ICU in either north or south Brooklyn.

Transportation. While the subway system is under the control of the state, the city has full control over our ferry system. Currently, the ferry provides a comfortable, efficient commute to communities along the eastern coast of Brooklyn, and extends all the way to Rockaway Beach, bypassing the massive transit desert that extends from East New York to the eastern edge of Coney Island. While the planned expansion to the western end of Coney Island is a good first step, I will push to create several new ferry stops in southeast Brooklyn and connect bus service to them.

Education. Many of our public schools are hopelessly outdated or in disrepair. We can't expect children to take their education seriously if we can't even be bothered to maintain the buildings where they learn.

Nonprofit infrastructure. So often, when our government falls short, community organizations step up to fill the gaps. Whether it's a community center where neighborhood organizations can host programming or refrigerators and trucks for mutual aid groups, I'll invest in the organizations that are doing the essential work that our government can't or won't do.

Green spaces. When I was a child, my neighborhood of Bed Stuy didn't have a single tree. Our sidewalks were bare and our parks were all concrete. My mom successfully advocated to get street trees planted in our neighborhood, but, decades later, inequities still remain. I believe that no park should be all concrete. I'll invest in greening our open spaces and sidewalks.

9. If elected, would you post on your website all applications received by your office for capital and expense discretionary funds, as well as groups which ultimately received funding?

Yes

COMMUNITY BOARDS AND APPOINTMENTS

10. 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. Using the planning resources available, how would you use the office to help community boards fulfill their charter mandated responsibilities to provide feedback on land use proposals, while enabling the boards to make decisions independent of the borough president's office?

I believe that we need more community-led leadership and less top-down leadership. As a result, community board trainings will be a priority in my administration. In addition to trainings on the role of community boards and the intricacies of zoning law, we will also provide information on each community's existing infrastructure, including transit, education, first responders, and grocery stores. I will also offer trainings on environmentally sustainable construction.

11. 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, and how would you assure that appointments represent the diversity of the borough's neighborhoods?

I will actively recruit for these positions to make sure we have people that reflect the community they serve. This requires going into each community and meeting the people who are involved at the ground level. I will also hold a series of recruiting meet and greet events open to anyone who is interested in attending to learn about how to get more actively involved in civics. And, I will reach out to community leaders and organizers in each neighborhood for recommendations on up and coming talent.

For some of these positions, such as CECs, I believe it is Borough Hall’s responsibility to provide trainings to ensure that any appointee is qualified. We will never be fully inclusive if we allow expertise to function as a barrier to participation. For positions where that degree of training is impractical, I’ll seek out people who are active in their communities on the relevant issues.

12. Do you support granting the borough presidents the ability to make an additional appointment to the Board of Standards and Appeals, who would only vote on matters affecting that borough?

Yes

13. Do you support establishing independent budgeting for community boards?

Yes

MISCELLANEOUS

14. 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.

I was a member of Senator Velmanette Montgomery's working group to reform the juvenile justice system in New York State. There were numerous lawsuits and investigations into OCS, and the federal government threatened to take over if there weren't immediate improvements. Our committee looked in depth at the various issues and worked with administrators in OCS to improve policies so that youths had better protections, education, and mental healthcare.

15. What are the top three campaign promises or goals, and what action will you take to achieve them if elected? Feel free to reference an answer above rather than restate it.

First: COVID Recovery: As previously mentioned, I'll transform Borough Hall into a One Stop Shop to help Brooklynites navigate government assistance, and deploy a Mobile Borough Hall to bring this help to every neighborhood. The One Stop Shop will also be home to a Small Business Resource Center, which will help businesses obtain aid. I will also appoint a Mutual Aid Czar to provide support to mutual aid groups and nonprofit organizations that are struggling to obtain reimbursements for the additional work they have been doing to respond to this crisis.

Second: Affordable Housing: We can't count on for-profit developers to meet our affordable housing needs. My church built almost two hundred units of affordable housing on our property, and through the Housing Development Corporation of East New York I've developed an additional 900 units of truly affordable housing with extensive community input. As Borough President, I'll prioritize helping community nonprofits and houses of worship to develop underutilized properties into 100% affordable housing, and help community land trusts work with the city to develop city-owned property into 100% affordable housing. In addition, I will not support any residential development project going through ULURP unless it is at least 60% affordable based on incomes from that neighborhood and has community support.

Third: Healthcare: Already our leaders seem to have forgotten that many people, especially in communities of color, died of COVID because of our inadequate healthcare infrastructure. I'll prioritize rebuilding that infrastructure and provide additional support to practitioners who serve low income communities. This will include an expanded Medical Training Corps that provides social workers in training free of charge and several other resources as well. I'll be announcing my full plan shortly.

16. If you have not addressed this already, in what major ways would your priorities as borough president differ from the incumbent?

Unlike our prior Borough Presidents, I'm not a politician. I'm a community nonprofit executive, and

I'm going to lead Borough Hall the same way I've led nonprofit organizations -- by using the resources of Borough Hall to serve the people of Brooklyn. I'll make Borough Hall a One Stop Shop for constituent services assistance and deploy a Mobile Borough Hall to every community. I'll also organize street fairs where people can come and have fun while accessing mobile healthcare units, getting assistance signing up for benefits programs and health insurance, and get connected with programs that encourage healthy living, like exercise and nutrition classes.

I'll also track, map, and publicize where our government is spending our tax dollars (and where it isn't) to give advocates the information they need to hold our leaders accountable, and I'll use that data to inform my own capital funding allocations.

I'll cultivate our youth by setting up youth community boards and encouraging youth participatory budgeting, because our young people deserve a say in our city.

What else would you like us to know about yourself?

I am not taking money from the for-profit real estate industry, criminal justice unions, or industry associations. When I'm elected, the only people I'll owe are the voters.

I grew up in HUD-subsidized housing in Bed Stuy, the oldest of five. In spite of the fact that both my parents worked, we struggled to get by. Even though it was tough, my mom taught me that we had enough to give back, and we regularly helped our neighbors put food on the table (and they helped us when we needed it). As the oldest, it was often my responsibility to go to the grocery store with food stamps, care for my siblings -- I even went to housing court on my parents' behalf when I was fifteen.

In spite of these challenges, I forged a good life for myself and my children. But I'm the exception, and it shouldn't be that way, so I'm going to make myself the rule.

Please feel free to attach any additional information such as resume, campaign brochures, or issues statements.

Please review your answers by clicking [PREVIEW ANSWERS](#) below. You can submit the questionnaire at

the bottom of the preview page by clicking SUBMIT.

Once you click SUBMIT, you will receive a confirmation email with a PDF file containing your responses. 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.