



Monday, May 24, 2021

## Citizens Union 2021 Candidate Questionnaire - New York City Mayor

Dear Candidate,

In the following pages, you will find questions regarding your positions on various reform issues and your plans for office. The form includes four sections: the pandemic and city government, elections and voting, police accountability, and miscellaneous.

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](#).

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**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.

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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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org)

We thank you very much for your response.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Your Info

#### Name

Shaun Donovan

#### Running in what primary

Democratic

**Age**

**Education**

**Occupation/Employer**

**Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement**

Former OMB Director, Former HUD Secretary, Former HPD Commissioner,

**Website**

shaunfornyc.com

**Twitter**

@ShaunforNYC

**Facebook**

**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**



**THE PANDEMIC AND CITY GOVERNMENT**

**1. If elected, you will start your term as New York City (hopefully) begins to reopen its**

**businesses, offices, and institutions. How will you utilize the mayor's office to help rebuild the economic base of NYC?**

We will work relentlessly to get New Yorkers back to work, committing to creating 500,000 jobs for New Yorkers by the end of his first term. The Donovan administration will prioritize building an equitable economy where all New Yorkers have the opportunity to build the skills they need to secure good jobs, grow professionally, and make a good living.

The devastation wrought in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic and the national reckoning on race that followed the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others have only made it clearer that we cannot simply work toward a return to normal. We must hold ourselves and our economy to a much higher standard.

We need a city committed to using its power and resources to ensure a fair playing field for everyone; where everyone has a fair chance at a life of dignity; where everyone can earn a decent living, build a business, and test their talents and ambitions; and where businesses thrive—in every neighborhood and every borough.

We need a city committed to investing in neighborhoods and communities, and the small businesses and entrepreneurs that power them, and to driving job growth, stimulating entrepreneurship, sustaining the environment, and enhancing the quality of life of all New Yorkers. Every New Yorker should have the opportunity to live in a 15 minute neighborhood, where a great public school, fresh food, access to rapid transportation, a park, and a chance to get ahead can all be found within 15 minutes of their front door.

We need a city focused not only on the problems of today, but the opportunities of tomorrow: with our plan, we will build the industries that will drive long-term growth and create good jobs for years to come.

In rebuilding our city, we need to start where job loss and economic decline have been most sharp and consequential. Our plan for New York's economic recovery is anchored in six key principles of equitable development:

Grow the economy to create opportunities for all New Yorkers  
Build a path for every New Yorker to develop skills that are directly tied to jobs  
Invest in neighborhoods, beginning with those that have endured the greatest disinvestment  
See, understand, and address racial inequalities explicitly, and measure progress  
Address inequalities head-on in partnership with community and business leaders  
Prioritize racial equity through strategic leadership and key appointments

**2. New York City is facing an economic and fiscal crisis. How would you ensure the fiscal health and integrity of city spending, while providing New Yorkers with valuable city services?**

Finding effective, sustainable solutions to our City's economic and budgetary crisis will be a key priority for our next mayor. Based on my decades of public service experience, including my two and a half as Director of the Office of Management and Budget, I strongly believe that a balanced approach to lowering expenses and increasing revenues is necessary.

As OMB Director, I worked to make the tax code more progressive, and I will continue these efforts as Mayor. This means collaborating with my colleagues in the federal government to end the Trump tax cuts and asking the wealthy to pay a fairer share.

One in five New Yorkers are now out of work. As a direct result, the city is staring down a fiscal pandemic. The response ought to begin with the president and Congress sending back just some of the \$26.6 billion more that our state pays than it draws down each year.

We cannot borrow our way out of this crisis. We must work with public employees, unions and other stakeholders to build consensus for the tough decisions that lie ahead.

This will take collaboration and a commitment to smart investments that give everyone a fair shot at economic opportunity and security, while driving down the deficit. Instead of posing a choice

between borrowing or 22,000 layoffs, we should propose smarter options, such as attrition and a real hiring freeze, reducing prescription drug costs by increasing city bargaining power with insurers and pharmacy benefit providers, improving health-care quality and lowering costs through delivery system reform with strategies we used in the Affordable Care Act, and reexamining the city's widespread use of private consultants.

With a spotlight on racial inequity, we should focus on policing reform, but also look more broadly to reduce the cost of corrections, where we spend over half a million dollars per incarcerated prisoner each year. And if we don't get the help we need from Congress, we will need to look at additional revenues and cuts that don't hurt our recovery. At a moment when partisan gridlock and political infighting have become an all-too-common excuse to justify inaction, I challenge the city's leadership to embrace the same responsibilities as the New Yorkers they represent.

We will explicitly connect taxes to growth-supporting investments and job creation. Very specific investments—in transit and housing especially—are proven drivers of economic growth. We will make growth-focused capital investments and set standards for the management of costs as these are built.

We are not starting with assumptions that solving the budget will require a general increase in property or income taxes. Any tax proposals will be viewed through the lenses of equity and the short- and long-term needs of the City, in particular looking to protect working people and small businesses.

**3. In March 2020, Mayor de Blasio issued a state of emergency in New York City (as did Governor Cuomo in NY State) to remove any legal and regulatory barriers to fight the coronavirus pandemic. Do you have any concerns regarding the use of emergency powers by the Mayor during this crisis? How do you think city government can maintain public accountability standards at this time?**

No, as long as there is transparency and an end date for when the powers sunset. Public accountability is achieved through transparency and clear

communication with the public.

**4. The ability of citizens and advocates to make their voices heard in City Hall has been severely curtailed since city government shifted to work remotely. The next Mayor will need to decide how to adapt to the new reality. How would you propose to improve community engagement and public participation while using remote technology (in public hearings, meetings, etc.), particularly to ensure equity in participation?**

The first step to identifying and remedying the gaps in internet connectivity is to conduct a broadband needs assessment across the city. This would be done in tandem with internet service providers to identify broadband and technological deserts.

To ensure equity, we would focus on poorly connected areas first by collecting and analyzing neighborhood-level data to identify the lowest broadband connectivity, affordability, and choice of internet service providers.

As more New Yorkers are getting online, it is important to know that they know how to access the internet and all of the resources available to them. Through CBOs, neighborhood groups, libraries, and other resources, we would encourage and support that internet education trainings become available to all residents.

While connectivity is the first step, we also need to make sure that New Yorkers have the hardware they need to access the internet. We will continue our existing partnerships and forge new public-private partnerships to increase the number of devices distributed to communities most in need.

## **VOTING AND ELECTIONS REFORM**

**5. Do you consider yourself a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting? How will you work to maintain this system and educate voters on how it works?**

Yes, I am a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting; it is a powerful democratic tool to ensure that elections are fair and that voters have greater say in choosing their representative. I am confident that by having more choices, not less, New Yorkers will be even

more empowered to make their voices heard this election.

**6. Now that New York City has implemented Ranked Choice Voting, do you support moving to an Open Primary system (eliminating party primaries and establishing a non-partisan election system)**

No

**Comments**

**7. How will you use your power as Mayor to improve the operations of the NYC Board of Elections and its accountability to the city?**

It is clear that the status quo is not working with regards to the BOE. The office overseeing our electoral system should be staffed and run by our best and brightest, and not populated with beneficiaries of political patronage. However before taking any action on this issue, I would engage the community extensively to help come up with solutions.

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**8. The next mayor will appoint seven members to the city's redistricting commission. In doing so, the next mayor will have share the responsibility for shaping a fair political map for the coming decade. If elected, what objectives will you have in appointing commission members?**

I will make sure that those appointed are the most qualified for the position while also ensuring that they are representative of the diverse makeup of the city.

**9. Mayor de Blasio created a DemocracyNYC office, headed by a Chief Democracy Officer, tasked with increasing voter registration, improving voter access, promoting youth participation, and advancing democratic**

**reforms. The Campaign Finance Board, the Board of Elections, and the Civic Engagement Commission share similar responsibilities. How would your administration organize its efforts to promote civic engagement and participation? How would that fit in your overall vision for the city?**

I will appoint the city's first Chief Equity Officer that will oversee that these efforts are done so in a way that is efficient, transparent, and inclusive of all residents of the city. I would aim to minimize redundancies between these agencies so that these programs are efficient.

**10. Do you support allowing the winner of a special election for a city office (except the mayor) to serve the remainder of the unexpired term, instead of only filling the position until the next general election?**

Yes

**Comments**

I support the special election winner finishing the remainder of the unexpired term.

**11. The de Blasio administration launched a citywide civic education program, Civics for All, which included a new curriculum, training for teachers, and increased student voter registration drives. Do you support maintaining Civics for All and student voter registration drives at the same capacity?**

Yes

**Comments**

## **POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY**

Citizens Union has been studying police accountability and performance in New York City for more than a decade. In our reports and advocacy efforts we have urged city government to strengthen the accountability of the New York Police Department to the public and create a more cohesive system of police oversight. Previous reports include: [2016 issue brief](#), [2013 position brief on Stop and Frisk](#), [2012 report on the CCRB](#), [2008 policy statement on police misconduct](#). Citizens Union's 2021 agenda for police reform, [published as a report](#) in March, calls for establishing a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, allowing the CCRB to appeal the Police Commissioner's decisions, making the appointment of Police Commissioner subject to advice and consent of the City Council, consolidating agencies with oversight authority, ending qualified immunity, and more.



**12. Do you support appointing a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, with the expertise and authority to monitor and supervise the Police Department on the Mayor's behalf?**

No

**13. Do you support making the appointment of the Police Commissioner subject to the advice and consent of the City Council?**

No

#### Comments

**14. Who do you think should have the final say on discipline in the police department? How would you ensure penalties are imposed on police officers that commensurate with the gravity of their wrongdoing?**

I support an empowered and independent CCRB.

**15. Do you support allowing the Civilian Complaint Review Board's (CCRB) to initiate an investigations without having to wait for an individual complaint?**

Yes

#### Comments

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**16. Do you support granting the CCRB prompt and full access to footage from body-worn cameras, police officers' employment history and disciplinary records and all other document and materials in the possession of the NYPD relevant to its investigations?**

Yes

#### Comments

**17. Do you support consolidating the three bodies that exercise oversight of the NYPD: the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), the Inspector General for the Police Department, the Mayor’s Commission to Combat Police Corruption?**

No

**Comments**

I believe the CCRB should be an independent agency.

**18. Do you support moving the disciplinary hearings for police officers, like those for all other City employees, to be conducted before the independent administrative law judges of OATH (Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings) rather than within the NYPD?**

No

**Comments**

**19. Feel free to add any other policy proposals you support in regards to police accountability, misconduct, and oversight, or to effective policing including functions, training, and community relations.**

Please see [shaunfornyc.com/issues/criminal-justice](http://shaunfornyc.com/issues/criminal-justice) for our full policy platform.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

**20. How would you utilize city-affiliated nonprofit organizations such as the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City in raising private revenue to supplement city agencies and programs? How would you ensure that there is sufficient transparency and accountability of funding received through such entities?**

Although the city was at the forefront of transparency in the early 2000s, the City has deprioritized the data and technology infrastructure advancements it needed to ensure that residents can access the necessary services to increase quality of life for all New Yorkers. We need to invest in updating legacy operating models and improve outdated business processes to help New

Yorkers more easily access information about City services and open the doors for communities to partner with the City to solve pressing challenges.

Our current antiquated systems and layers of bureaucracy result in inefficient, lengthy, and unfair practices that fail to deliver the best value to residents of the city. In order to bring our City's procurement practices into the 21st century, we need to assess and update the current system.

The first step to updating the City's procurement would be a review of contract and approval policy and process. The process takes too long with too many offices and agencies involved. The City needs to review both policies and processes to identify where cost and time can be saved.

A diverse city needs a diverse pool of products and services. This would require an assessment of the amount of contracted dollars going to local minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBES) to ensure fairness. Read more about our plans to support MWBES in our Economic Development Platform.

All City contracts, especially human service contracts, should be tied to strategic outcomes and vendor performance, and grounded in true partnership with our human services providers. This ensures that every dollar the City spends is used to support citywide priorities and meet the needs of New Yorkers, and that we are being good partners and working to achieve shared outcomes. This also holds the City accountable for the contracts that we sign.

Agencies should continue to have a designated Agency Chief Contracting Officers (ACCOs), but the responsibilities of the Department of Consumer Affairs should be increased to ensure that the development and review of solicitations and bids along with the issuing of contracts is housed within a central enterprise procurement office.

**21. 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 tenure during the Obama Administration, I created two programs that advanced government transparency and oversight, The first, HUDStat, used data- and metrics-driven, approaches to decision making around money and resources. Through HUDStat, HUD has identified local challenges that have led to streamlined processes, resulting in outcomes such as increased housing voucher utilization for homeless veterans in Los Angeles and Jacksonville. While at OMB, I created the White House Task Force on Community Solutions, a team of Cabinet members working to improve how agencies worked together, using data in new ways to tackle entrenched poverty and to deliver results in communities across the country.

## **22. In light of everything we have discussed above, why do want to be mayor?**

I believe I am the most qualified, experienced candidate in this field because I was the Secretary for Housing and Urban Development in the Obama-Biden Administration, and subsequently served as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, managing the \$4 trillion federal budget.

My past service taught me what it means to lead in moments of crisis, much like the one New York is facing today. I became Housing Commissioner here in New York City after 9/11, and helped to rebuild our City. Early in my career and then during my tenure as Housing Commissioner, I helped the Brownsville, East New York and South Bronx communities build Nehemiah housing, one of the most successful housing efforts in the nation that created more than 5,000 affordable homes.

I also created the Center for NYC Neighborhoods, the nation's first response of its kind to the foreclosure crisis to save New Yorker's homes and preserve Black and Brown wealth. President Obama asked me to be Housing Secretary in the midst of the worst housing crisis of our lifetime and then tasked me with leading this city back after Hurricane Sandy hit our shores. As HUD Secretary, I helped families across the country rent or buy affordable homes, revitalized distressed communities, fought discrimination and dramatically reduced homelessness.

Three weeks into my time as Director of the Office of Management of Budget, Ebola hit the US. And we

worked to make sure that a global threat did not become a pandemic that would cost hundreds of thousands of American lives. And during my time managing the federal budget we invested in a broad range of progressive priorities, like the Affordable Care Act, while still bringing down our budget faster than at any time since World War 2.

I deeply believe that in order to properly serve and lift up all New Yorkers, my Administration must not only apply a lens of equity to all of our policies, but also create a structure of accountability where we consistently engage with communities and measure our progress.

One of my principle policies aimed at achieving this is the designation of our City's first Chief Equity Officer to set goals, keep track of our progress, and coordinate across all NYC agencies to ensure progressive achievements.

At the individual issue level, my campaign has committed to including equity-focused recommendations within each one of our comprehensive policy platforms, from establishing a School Diversity and Integration Office within the Department of Education and applying an equity review to short-term budgetary and staffing reductions and adjustments within schools to ensure each New York City student has a chance at a good education, to launching Equity Corporate Commitments meant to drive substantially higher Black, Latinx, and Asian job participation in high-wage and middle-income work.

Underlying all of these efforts is a deep belief that collaboration and open conversation are vital to helping a community thrive. I look forward to discussing specific policy questions and partnering with you to address your community's most pressing challenges.

**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](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org).