



Tuesday, April 20, 2021

## Citizens Union 2021 Candidate Questionnaire - City Council

Dear Candidate,

Congratulations on your decision to run for New York City Council!

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 five short sections: serving constituent, elections and voting, police accountability, council rules and procedures, 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 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 and Continue Later at the bottom of every page.

Once you submit the questionnaire, you will receive a confirmation email with 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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**

Brent O'Leary

**Running for Council District number**

26

**In which primary**

Democratic

**If elected, which legislative conference will you join (e.g., Democrat, Republican, other)?**

Democrat

**Age**

50

**Education**

Juris Doctorate

**Occupation/Employer**

Axiom Legal Services

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

President of the Board of Woodside on the Move,  
President of the Hunters Point Civic Association,  
Candidate for City Council District 26, 2009

**Campaign Contact Information****Website**

[www.olearyforcouncil.com](http://www.olearyforcouncil.com)

**Twitter**

@brentoleary

**Facebook**

Brent O'Leary for NYC Council

**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**



## **SERVING CONSTITUENTS**

**1. For most New Yorkers, the most important thing that their council members do is provide constituent services. How would you run your office to serve your community needs? Please give specific examples.**

My office will be responsive and transparent. As President of the Hunters Point Civic people reach out to me all the time on community problems. I respond promptly, help where I can or put them in touch worth the organization that can. We will also have multiple language capacity to serve our diverse district and have a log where people can understand how we work on their issues.

**2. If you served as an elected official, what did you do to help your constituents during the Covid-19 pandemic? Please be specific.**

I did not serve as an elected official but 1st I worked with LIC Relief and for 2 months I delivered food to the doors of those who could not get out. I also delivered masks and medical equipment to Elmhurst Hospital at the height of the epidemic. Then I founded a food pantry and we have now after 1 year served over 100,000 people, making sure no one in our neighborhoods would go food insecure.

**3. How long have you lived in the district in which you are running for office?**

13 years and my father grew up here.

**4. If elected, what is the first piece of legislation you would want to introduce?**

The Small Business Job Survival Act

## **VOTING AND ELECTIONS**

**5. How would you describe the relationship between the City Council and the New York City Board of Elections? How will you use your power as a council member to improve the operations of the NYC BOE?**

Disfunctional. The Board of elections needs to be transparent, non-partisan and professional, I will work to achieve that.

**6. 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. I will fight to keep this and make sure all know how it works. My campaign has already created 2 videos, one in English and one in Spanish, to explain Rank Choice Voting in our area. called "How does Ranked Choice Voting Work?" It is posted on Youtube and links to other resources on Rank Choice Voting.

**7. The next City Council will appoint members to the city's redistricting commission and decide whether to approve or reject the commission's districting plans. In doing so, future council members will be responsible for shaping a fair political map for the coming decade. If elected, what would your approach be in proposing or voting to appoint commission members, and in considering proposed district maps?**

The members of the commission must be truly independent, not just from political parties but also incumbents and special interests. I will make sure commissioners are truly independent and will work to reflect the how communities are truly shaped and consider gender, language, ethnicity and other important factors so that all may be represented fully and fairly.

**8. 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)?**

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.

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

Yes

Comments

**10. 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?**

The CCRB should have final power on discipline in the police department. They need to be empowered to do so and any criminal matters need to be decided in a court of law.

**11. 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?**

Yes

Comments

**12. Do you support giving 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**

**13. 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.**

## **HOW CITY COUNCIL WORKS**

One of the first items on the next City Council's agenda will be adopting its rules of proceedings. Those rules will have a substantial effect on the ability of lawmakers to advance their goals, and can send a signal to New Yorkers about elected officials' commitment to making the Council more representative, deliberative, accountable, and efficient. In the last decade, the Council took important steps to reform its rules, including a 2014 overhaul by then-Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and a 2018 administrative change by Speaker Corey Johnson. These reforms have made the body more democratic, given members a more meaningful role in the legislative process, ensured greater equity in the allocation of discretionary funding, and made drafting procedures more transparent. Still, more work is needed enable members to function more effectively and independently of the speaker, and to increase public participation.

**14. Do you support allowing bills with strong support to go through the committee process and put to a vote on the floor without needing the permission of the speaker?**

Yes

**Comments**

**15. Do you support reducing the overall number of committees so members can participate more meaningfully in fewer issues?**

Yes

**Comments**

**16. Do you support making all actions designed to influence any City Council outcome, including the choice of speaker, reportable as a lobbying expense?**

Yes

**Comments**

**17. The Council Speaker controls the allocation of a large share of the Council’s overall discretionary spending, and in 2020 it was reported that the Speaker used this power to “punish” council members who opposed the 2021 budget. How would you balance control and order in the council with reasonable dissent?**

The Council Speaker has too much control. Power needs to be de-centralized to members as the members can be more effective for their constituents. This will also foster more collaboration and discussion between members.

**18. The ability of citizens and advocates to make their voices heard in City Hall has been severely curtailed since the council and city government shifted to work remotely. 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 technology is there to have meaningful participation and input from the public. The political will is not there. We need to simplify the process and make the public aware of all their options to participate. This input and the response to it needs to be tracked and open for keep our government accountable.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

**19. New York City has suffered an immensurable loss from the pandemic and its effects and the city’s economy, social life, and culture. What is your path to recovery from this crisis?**

We need to revive the economy with help to small business such as the Small Business Job Survival

Act and a robust work program paying living wages including for artists (as was done in the Depression) and we need to make sure all are food secure and housing secure through true affordable housing and all have access to proper medical care. This stability will help us get through the crisis.

**20. 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 am a proponent of clean, responsive and transparent government. I am the 1st candidate in the history of my district to refuse all donations from real estate developers and lobbyists. I believe we need campaign finance on the state and federal levels along with term limits. I have proposed that all materials given by lobbyists to elected officials should be made public and I am a supporter of open primaries.

**21. 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.**

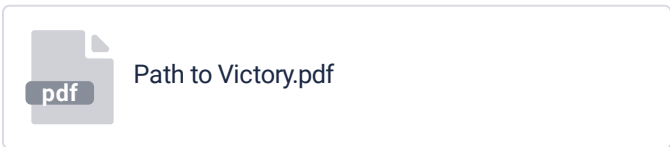
First: Pass the Small Business Job Survival Act

Second: Fully fund NYC Care so all have access to health care

Third:

## ADDITIONAL INFO

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



**What else would you like us to know about yourself?**

My campaign is based on community service. I am from a working class background and an immigrant family and was able to achieve my dreams because of community and government support. This campaign is to make sure all the people in our



diverse community have those same resources and protections.

**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 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).