



Saturday, May 1, 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](#).

**

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.

**

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

We thank you very much for your response.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Your Info

Name

Elizabeth Adams

Running for Council District number

33

In which primary

Democratic

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

Democrat

Age

33

Education

Bachelors

Occupation/Employer

NYC Council

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

New Kings Democrats; mutual aid groups in North Brooklyn and co-founder of Downtown Brooklyn/Boerum Hill; DSA; PPGNY Activist Council; Brooklyn Young Democrats Brooklyn Democratic County Committee Member; Judicial Delegate, AD 50

Campaign Contact Information**Website**

ElizabethAdams.nyc

Twitter

@elizabadams

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/ElizabethAdamsNYC>

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.

Working in the 33rd district office, I've worked on many constituent cases firsthand. Housing and HRA cases are often the calls the office receives, and I would partner with local organizations to have their staff provide office hours for constituents of tenant/legal services and case management assistance every week in the district office. This would help constituents know they have a place they can turn for a range of case management support and that they have a one-stop shop for assistance, not more referrals.

I would like to have a storefront office to be easily available for walk-ins, and bring on staff from various communities and neighborhoods able to work closely with community members in their own language and background. I firmly hold the value of 'meeting people where they are' and so will work to make my office accessible through staff services as well as have satellite Council office locations to bring council services directly to residents in their

own neighborhood. The district covers a long stretch of Brooklyn, and so bringing the office to residents more directly helps with addressing constituent access needs.

Overall, I am running to bring community organizing and participatory governance to the Council. During my time at Planned Parenthood and in the Council I have followed the value that people most directly impacted should be driving our policy and organizing work and that is how I intend to legislate: as someone committed to democratizing our legislative process and making local government more accessible and open, beyond traditional political circles.

During my campaign I have shown these values of increased access to government process and responsiveness. We've organized virtual neighborhood town halls to discuss specific local issues like sanitation and pollution, as well as policy happy hours on topics including transit and small businesses – our campaign is committed to involving constituents in the process of collaborative policy generation.

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

When COVID-19 hit, I connected residents to SNAP and unemployment insurance; helped implement the Open Streets in the district; and assisted commercial and residential tenants fighting harassment from landlords through my work in the Council office. But I also saw the limitations of government in providing a real social safety net we needed – so I went outside of government, helping organize mutual aid efforts across the District. I set up grocery deliveries between neighbors, distributed PPE to hospital staff and seniors; and set up a Metrocard exchange program for essential workers.

As my role as Legislative Director for the local Council Member, I pushed for safe housing for homeless New Yorkers during the pandemic. I drafted the bill to provide hotels for people living in congregate shelters and pushed the administration to move thousands of residents into individualized units.

I fight for the 33rd District everyday because I have

lived the issues of the district. I am a lifelong renter; my family has faced the instability of unemployment and addiction, and I've worked in countless bars and restaurants like the ones that are trying to adapt to be able to keep staff on and pay rent. I know the ways our public school system works and doesn't work and I am ready to take on our entrenched systems to enact meaningful change.

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

I moved to North Brooklyn 10 years ago.

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

I would like to introduce commercial rent stabilization. I worked on the bill as Legislative Director after hearing from small businesses across the district who continue to face severe rent burdens – and coming out of the pandemic is the time to enact the legislation. At a time when there is so much instability in our city and for our small businesses, our government should provide some stability. It has become clear that until we address skyrocketing rent issues and put in place mechanisms for regulation and lease consistency, we won't be able to solve our small business crisis. I've promoted the legislation at Community board meetings, with BIDs, and other community groups to expand support and education on the bill, and will help get this bill over the finish line in the council. I believe it is a vital part of our city's recovery and long-term planning.

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?

The Council has rubber stamped appointments to the BOE and failed to expose the nepotism and lack of accountability, which should end immediately. The patronage system has gone on unabated for too long. The Council should require a thorough vetting process for appointments with transparency and public involvement and push for a nonpartisan appointment process. We can professionalize the positions by having job requirements for

commissioners or staff members.

The Council also has a budgetary role over the BOE, which it should use. When rules are flouted by the BOE there is little recourse or accountability. The Council should use its budgetary oversight authority more strongly.

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! It is an important factor for my race and for NYC's democracy overall. My campaign has already partnered with a few other candidates on joint statements and collaborative RCV trainings to build recognition and ranking potentials for each others' voters. The D33 women candidates have also campaigned together in public, educating constituents about RCV and the opportunity to elect the first woman for this council district.

RCV allows us to have substantive policy conversations with voters who already have a first choice candidate in mind. This form of voter contact is invaluable, and allows us to redirect focus away from attacking other candidates and back to voters needs from their next city council member. This strategy, as well as our wide appeal and early presence across the district, will put us high on other candidates' second choice rankings. I have created an RCV video explainer and distributed materials during outreach with Rank the Vote.

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?

I would look to experts like the Brennan center and redistricting data analysts in how to engage in the redistricting process in an equitable manner. I would also look for nonpartisan appointments that value and factor in transparency in the redistricting process. Once redistricting begins the public should be able to offer input through public

hearings, and redistricting hearings should be open to the public.

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

We cut out too many voters in closed primaries.

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

Yes, there needs to be more accountability of who is chosen to oversee the police.

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?

I would push to remove disciplinary authority from the NYPD commissioner and to make CCRB determinations binding. An independent agency for accountability is essential – the focus needs to be on both removing commissioner authority and building a different system of accountability – and I think CCRB, with DOI and the Inspector General's office could provide that. I would work with state colleagues in drafting legislation to give NYC the authority to change discipline authority in the ad code 14-115.

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

Yes, I think consolidated they can be a powerful oversight entity of the NYPD.

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

The CCRB's role is to examine and analyze this footage and data -- restricting it or moving slowly flies in the face of CCRB's mandated authority.

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.

I worked on the bill to end qualified immunity and i believe this is an important step of accountability by the council.

Last year, I worked closely with advocates in calling on the Council to cut the NYPD budget by at least \$1billion dollars. After the vote, I joined with multiple Brooklyn women candidates in publishing an op-ed against the budget and the need to commit to a future that invests in communities. I support hiring freezes and/or layoffs to reduce the NYPD headcount -- we faced cuts of 22,000 social service workers, we should cut policing budgets before we let that happen.

The NYPD Vice Squad should also be eliminated -- it harms sex workers, especially trans women of color. During this year's budget cycle, I helped

secure the removal of NYPD involvement in homeless service outreach. While there is more work to do, I am proud of the work I have done to decouple police involvement from social service response needs.

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

I have watched too many bills get held up through one person with greater power.

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

Yes

Comments

The challenge is there is also not enough gender representation. Women members are often on more committees to have women on every committee, but it is more work – until recently there were also few women as non-subcommittee chairs.

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

I was a lobbyist for Planned Parenthood, this is

clearer.

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?

There is a real need for co-governance and collective leadership among council members as well as with community members for outside public accountability. In order to do the large scale change that we need, that our communities deserve, we have to have people organized and people working together in a strategic way. We need creative thinking and adaptive responses for the next few years especially and that is what I'm looking to bring to the council, creative thinking and an understanding of if we collaborate, we can do a lot more than if we're just pushing things forward on our own. The power of the Speaker is balanced when there's strategic member organizing, not siloed approaches.

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?

I would hold community town halls on issues and have those sessions inform hearing content and meetings. I would also flyer locally, in parks and public housing about upcoming hearings -- I think there's not nearly enough outreach done about some hearings and its often done in the same accessible manner. We need to go outside of the same political circles to bring people more into the process.

We also need language translations on every public zoom meeting, universal tablets available for students and their families to use, and the city should fund it.

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?

NYC needs to prioritize health care and public hospitals during COVID, otherwise we will face the ramifications of this pandemic for years to come. The expansion of programs like NYC Care are going to be more critical than ever in the stability and health of our city.

NYC has a \$90Billion budget and while revenue will be a challenge for the coming years, we have the resources to shift our priorities to the investments communities need, especially following the state's budget that secured greater equity in our taxes. We need to create a New Deal era program for job creation, such as a large scale recovery jobs program, and a green jobs workforce, including off shore wind, providing employment and revenue needed for New Yorkers who will be meeting critical city needs.

We also need to invest in housing programs that we know work. We should use city owned-land to require 100% affordable housing at deeply affordable rates. And we should significantly expand community land trusts and social housing. These are the long term investments our city needs to commit to now to start us on a better recovery path.

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've advocated for early voting, RCV, and campaign finance reform as a community member. I worked on the bill to end qualified immunity of police officers and pushed for a budget that reflected community needs not more carceral responses.

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: COVID recovery and relief for small businesses;

Second: transportation access and open public green space - securing funding for Bushwick inlet park and toxic soil remediation

Third: affordable and safe communities for all, and creating a Social housing development agency

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?

I plan to change operations and processes at the local District level to give community members more control, including expanding participatory budgeting to have ongoing PB leadership informing my district's and the Council's budget process; and establishing community advisory groups for my office on local issues to develop a more collaborative governing model for the district. Community members should be involved in policy generation from the outset, as a form of participatory governance, instead of being contacted at the end of the process.

I am grateful for the work I've been able to accomplish as a public servant, during my time in the Council and separately. Some of my proudest moments have been helping coordinating mutual aid programming in Boerum Hill and Downtown Brooklyn, providing food assistance and grocery support to homebound and underserved neighbors; serving on the Mayor's Task force for sexual health education and helping secure \$25 million for sex ed in public schools; helping approve a 500 unit supportive and affordable housing project in the 33rd District at 90 Sands St.; exposing crisis pregnancy centers as fake clinics and securing DCA violations for centers operating as fake reproductive health clinics.

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.