



Friday, April 30, 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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**

Stu Sherman

**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**

39

**Education**

BA Wesleyan University, JD/MPH Boston University

**Occupation/Employer**

Senior Staff Attorney, New York Legal Assistance Group

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

Executive Director, NYS Department of Health Task Force on Life and the Law

Legislative Counsel, NYS Department of Health

Budget Analyst, NY State Senate Finance

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

stu2021.com

**Twitter**

@stu\_sherman

**Facebook**

/stu2021

**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 the initials 'BF' with a horizontal line extending to the right.

## **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.**

One of the most important aspects of a City Councilperson's position is how they connect with the community they represent. As a legal aid attorney who is trained in direct service work, I will make sure all staff in my office are ready to work with constituents and can connect them to appropriate resources when needed. As the Councilperson for District 33, I will ensure that I stay as close to the ground as possible. Our district is home to local clubs, movement leaders, and small businesses, all of which deserve a seat at the table. In the spirit of co-governance I intend to legislate with their input and direction. I will hold biweekly meetings with community leaders to gain their input and insight, as well as request their direction as I hire staff and community liaisons for my office.

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

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

I have lived in District 33 for 7 years

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

I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when I was six. Like so many across our city, I need insulin to survive. While I was lucky enough to have health insurance through my mother's union job, we were always one step away from danger. Since my diagnosis the cost of insulin has skyrocketed by over 1100%, costing upwards of \$10,000 per year. The first piece of legislation I would introduce would be the creation of city-run pharmacies connected to the New York Health + Hospital system. This would allow New Yorkers to access life-saving medication without ever having to make the choice between medicine and food.

## **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 NYBOE has shown its inability to successfully complete its mandate time after time. While the appointment process draws on advice from both parties and the City Council, there must be significantly more oversight of the commissioners. As a council member, I will propose the creation of a Committee on Election Administration, separate from the already existing Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections. This committee will be tasked with reviewing the operations and administration of the NYC BOE, not the outcome of elections themselves.

**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?**

I have always been a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting. The system allows for more accurate

representation at every level of government and produces results that are truer to the desires of the electorate. A key component of RCV's success will be education. We must continue to invest in RCV education and training, as well as incorporate RCV into the civics curricula across the city.

**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 firmly believe that the redistricting process should be as apolitical as is possible. Thus, I would propose appointing members who are observers and analysts of the political system and yet are not partisan actors. This could include academics, civil servants, and local community leaders. I would work with members of the community to determine who we should appoint in order to maximize input from my district. We must also ensure that traditionally marginalized communities have a seat at the table during the redistricting process so that their voices are not ignored in how political power is distributed.

**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?**

I believe that an elected civilian review board should have the final say on discipline in the police department. I will support legislation to create such a board, in line with organizing efforts that are already being done. The current review board is appointed and is not accountable to the public. The police commissioner has complete discretion when to accept or reject their recommendations. As the judicial authority, the District Attorney works hand-in-hand with the NYPD on prosecuting criminals and is in an ethically untenable position to investigate and prosecute those in power. An independent body, accountable to the people, empowered to make binding decisions is necessary to ensure proper oversight and accountability. In addition, a special prosecutor must be assigned to the civilian review board, independent of the DA, to enforce any determinations. This is the very minimum we our city requires to begin to bring structural change to the NYPD.

**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.**

We must rapidly reduce the NYPD budget alongside efforts to hold law enforcement accountable. The reduction should be determined by how much other programs need funding in order to cover the cost of the new services or increased services they will need to provide. As policing alternatives develop further, more reductions in the NYPD will be called for, as their role in responding is reduced. For example, we must move the job of traffic cops to the DOT and the remove the police role in mental health response. Police have no business in either of these situations.

## **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**

My only caveat is that this must come at the expansion of subcommittees for specific purposes.

**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?**

Speaker Johnson's use of discretionary spending to punish council members who voted against the budget is an example of politics at its worst. It displays an absolute contempt for differing opinions and for the clear displeasure with the budget itself. We must move the allocation of discretionary spending out of the hands of the speaker and to a standing group or committee with representation from every borough that has the job of hearing applications for discretionary spending and allocating to council members accordingly.

**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?**

As city operations have become remote, a large portion of people who do not have access to



technology have been severed from the political process. I have proposed the creation of a community based, city-run social work program to help folks navigate the bureaucratic process. This group would also act as political liaisons and can ensure a smoother participation in our municipal government -- from assisting with attending virtual events, to spreading information on opportunities for feedback.

## **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?**

As a legal service attorney who was working at Woodhull Hospital when the pandemic hit, I saw first hand the immeasurable destruction it caused on our communities. We must take bold, multifaceted action as we fight to restore our city in its wake. Our local businesses owe thousands of dollars of back-rent for months they were unable to operate. I propose relief for these store-owners funded through COVID-19 bonds and a small business legal aid program to give local businesses the tools to navigate city bureaucracy. Our healthcare system must be overhauled so as to prevent the outcomes we have seen from ever happening again. We must expand NYC Care into a comprehensive health coverage plan for all New York City residents, open city run pharmacies, and reform our elder care so we do not fail our seniors. We must also reform the ULERP process to create more affordable housing and adopt a housing first model to end homelessness once and for all.

### **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 have spent my career working to help patients and clients navigate the byzantine, bureaucratic structures of our city government in order to get them the services they need. From representing undocumented folks in the face of deportation, to helping ensure people can get out of nursing homes back to their families, my career has

revolved around guiding my clients through these processes. I am running for City Council to make a municipal government whose focus is to make these systems clearer and easier for New Yorkers, not put up walls between our city's most vulnerable and the services they need.

**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.**

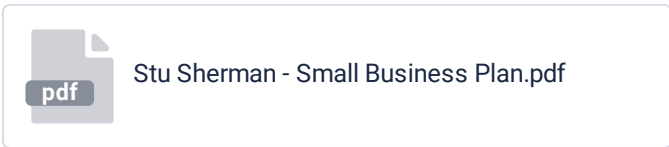
First: Open city-run community pharmacies to expand access to life-saving medication at prices New Yorkers can afford using the 340b program.

Second: Provide relief for small business who are in debt for months they couldn't stay open funded through COVID-19 Bonds

Third: Transform NYC Care, which was little more than a repackaging of existing programs, into a comprehensive health coverage plan for all New York City residents, included undocumented immigrants and people who would be charged unaffordable premiums for underinsured plans under the NY State of Health

## 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'm running to create a more just and equitable District 33. I have a lifelong career in public service, which was started in part because of my personal experience with Type 1 diabetes. I was diagnosed with diabetes at age six. I was lucky enough to have health insurance through my mother's union job as a public school teacher. However my family still had to fight to get the care and medication I needed to survive. This led me to a career in public health advocacy. Through my work and lived experience I have seen how failures in housing, food security, public assistance, transportation, and every other area lead to sickness and death. I worked for over a decade advocating for systemic changes in our healthcare system at a state level.

In 2016 I took that knowledge of the healthcare system to advocate for folks as a legal aid attorney. I now run free legal clinics at hospitals and health centers around the city, including the public hospital that serves North Brooklyn, Woodhull.

My experiences with our broken healthcare system have inspired me to run—from my lived realities as a diabetic, to my policy work in Albany and finally the daily fights I have on behalf of my clients. I have represented over 700 clients and developed new clinics to help working families and vulnerable communities. From courtrooms and hearing offices, to nursing homes and hospitals, my life's mission has been to take on the forces that threaten the wellbeing of those in my community. The organizers and advocates in my neighborhood have always stood up for each other in the face of adversity and injustice. We need to have elected officials that will stand with us, too.

I am running to implement systemic change in city government so no one goes without housing, healthcare, food or equitable economic opportunities. It would be the honor of a lifetime to carry this drive with me every day representing District 33 in City Council.

**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).