



Friday, May 7, 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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**

Crystal Hudson

**Running for Council District number**

35

**In which primary**

Democratic

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

Democrat

**Age**

38

**Education**

Spelman College, The George Washington University

**Occupation/Employer**

NA

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

I am proud to have served as a member of Brooklyn Community Board 8 for two years, and currently serve as a Kings County Committee member representing my electoral district, as well as on the Board of Lambda Independent Democrats of Brooklyn. I have been a member of the North Prospect Heights Association (NPHA) since 2018, and was a member of its board in 2019.

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

<https://www.crystalforbk.com/>

**Twitter**

<https://twitter.com/crystalrhudson>

**Facebook**

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

**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.**

I know firsthand that a combination of meeting folks' direct needs and working on big structural reform are two sides of the same coin in serving the 35th District. As someone who sought City resources for my mother and received very little help, a constituent services operation that my neighbors can rely on is key. First and foremost, I intend to hire social workers and social work interns who are from our community and experts in case management to serve our district. I will ensure that constituents receive timely, reliable responses as they navigate the complexity of City services. I will also use real time data from constituents to drive our policy and legislative decisions. I will use my office as a resource hub and convening space for mutual aid groups, community organizations, and nonprofits, pooling and providing free resources to ensure they can continue serving their neighborhoods for generations to come. As I think about our community's urgent needs as

we begin to emerge from the pandemic, making sure my neighbors are food secure is a top priority. Prior to the pandemic, almost 1.2 million New Yorkers experienced food insecurity, with the pandemic only exacerbating the crisis. The city attempted to fill gaps by providing everything from “grab-and-go” meals to partnering with delivery couriers to deliver customized meals to medically vulnerable populations. Yet the response was inadequate, and thus inspired everyday people – including myself – to form mutual aid organizations to provide food for their neighbors. Volunteers donated their time and money to shop for and deliver groceries to their neighbors, ensuring culturally relevant food they liked and wanted. I will establish a Mutual Aid Coordinator’s Office in the Mayor’s Office of Food Policy who will serve as the liaison between the city government and community-based food services, including mutual aid networks, nonprofits, community fridges, and food pantries. The office will also include mutual aid organizations in the city’s food donation programs and connect mutual aid groups with supermarkets and grocery stores, which are legally required to donate excess food to charity. I will also support the creation of a centralized mutual aid nonprofit to provide funding for and oversee existing mutual aid groups across the city, ensuring all mutual aid organizations can provide for their neighbors.

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

At the onset of the pandemic, I was deeply concerned about seniors like my mother who, without community connection, would be so vulnerable through this crisis. A couple of texts turned in to a neighborhood WhatsApp group which turned into Greater Prospect Heights Mutual Aid (GPHMA). GPHMA is a network of over 500 neighbors who are committed to providing groceries, friendly wellness calls, and other support to those in need. Since March 2020, we have provided direct support to our neighbors, all funded through grassroots community donations and individuals’ time. I am extremely proud of this intergenerational, multiracial mutual aid effort inspired by the Black and Indigenous traditions of mutual aid, and even more proud that it continues to this day. On a separate note, I also made full use

of my campaign infrastructure to help close the gap in vaccine access. When the Medgar Evers College FEMA vaccination site opened my campaign called seniors in our community to tell them about the vaccine and assisted them in setting up an appointment, if requested. It is this direct engagement in communities that it is necessary to make sure everyone has the access to the information that they need. Leveraging our campaign resources to do specific outreach to seniors in underserved communities is something I am particularly proud of – we reached over 2,000 seniors through this effort.

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

I am running for New York City Council, representing Brooklyn’s 35th District, which encompasses the neighborhoods of Crown Heights, Prospect Heights, Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, and Bedford-Stuyvesant. My family has been in this community for three generations, and I am running for office for many reasons, one being that I will ensure that families like mine can remain in our neighborhood for the long-term.

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

Every time the city decides to change how land is used multiple communities are impacted. The upzoning of a neighborhood could mean a change in the business culture of a neighborhood - jeopardizing Black-owned small businesses - or could mean a fundamental shift in the socioeconomic and racial demographics of a neighborhood given the types of housing or commercial land use proposed. As such, residents deserve to understand the full picture of how their homes may change if a land use proposal passes. Developers are already required to submit reports estimating the environmental impact of their projects. As such, one of the first pieces of legislation I would introduce would require a racial impact study for any land-use changes that also require an environmental review to understand the direct and indirect impacts of the project as they relate to race and ethnicity. Additionally, developers who show that their project will have a strong impact on the racial and ethnic character of a neighborhood in any manner must also submit their plans to correct that impact and ensure an anti-

racist development that does not harm specific groups and bolsters the local community. The City Planning Commission and all stakeholders in the ULURP process can then review these materials to determine whether the impact and suggested equity adjustments are satisfactory.

## **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?**

Despite earnest attempts to remove hyperpartisanship from how our city's elections are run, the New York City Board of Elections is currently an ineffective institution that fails to preserve and uphold the right of New Yorkers and is plagued by nepotism (10% of the agency is related) and no-show employees. I support reforming the BOE and working with state lawmakers to remove the partisan requirements that mandates the appointment of one staffer from each party, especially if the duplicate position is unnecessary. I will advocate for BOE operations to fall under the purview of the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB). I also support:

- Strengthening vetting of Council-reviewed BOE appointments who are frequently approved without thorough review;
- Bolstering enforcement of already passed city laws relating to the BOE;
- Increasing BOE oversight and accountability; and
- Prohibiting no-bid contracts for key BOE services (e.g. absentee ballot printing and mailing).

### **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 am a huge proponent of RCV and have used every tool in my campaign toolbox to spread the word. In 2019, New York City voters approved ranked choice voting, with nearly 75 percent of voters supporting the proposal. Cities with RCV have seen significant gains for candidates of color. San Francisco elected its first Black woman mayor, London Breed, and first Asian American mayor, Ed Lee. Lee won the election as the second choice consensus candidate, and Breed won with a clear majority in a

crowded race in which various candidates of color and white men ran. Historically underrepresented communities have always had to pick the lesser of two evils, for lack of a true first-choice option. But ranked choice voting means that more of us can get our voices out there. More of us can have a seat at the table. That means more and better choices for voters. I will work to support the continued implementation of Ranked Choice Voting after the 2021 election and support continuing to finance a public education campaign to ensure new and enrolled voters know how RCV works if they didn't vote in the 2021 election. So far, my campaign has hosted three different rank choice voting training events. We also produced a short video explaining rank choice voting and why it is a system that allows voters more choice. We will continue to do outreach in the district about rank choice voting in many different mediums, including folks who may not have access to digital resources.

**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 will ensure that we appoint a representative, apolitical group of commissioners who both the Council and the public can trust to execute this all-important task with integrity. I will ensure that the process whereby this commission meets, solicits public input and engages communities is widely known and advertised to the public. I will also ensure that I put a better, less gerrymandered, more representative district maps ahead of my own political interests, for the better of Brooklyn and our City.

**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

As a staunch advocate for a more diverse party system that reflect grassroots beliefs, and for a system that no longer makes it harder and harder for folks to cast their vote (ie. early deadlines to switch your party affiliation), an Open Primary system will allow more folks to both run and participate in the electoral process.

## 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

Time and time again, Mayoral administrations have demonstrated that they are invested in business as usual when it comes to policing.

### 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?

Time and time again, the NYPD demonstrates that it has no capacity to discipline police officers who harm and kill civilians, especially Black folks. I believe that a completely independent body with final decision-making authority should determine NYPD discipline, but the decision should never be relegated to collective bargaining. The body should contain a combination of 9 individuals, 5 of whom are elected (one from each borough), 2 appointed by the City Council, and 2 appointed by the Mayor. Police must be held accountable for abuses of power and every commissioner and Mayor seems to fear the wrath of the PBA and officers themselves to actually assume accountability. I will ensure the recently passed prohibition on qualified immunity for New York City law enforcement is



enforced and will work to allow people to recover monetary damages in civil lawsuits filed against police officers. Through labor negotiations, I support removing any and all indemnification clauses from contracts with police unions. These clauses are what redirect public funds to cover the legal fees of police officers and shield officers from liability for their actions.

**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.**

I support cutting the NYPD budget by at least \$1 billion and ensuring these cuts are related to core NYPD operations and practices – not just a symbolic shifting of funds. This includes instituting an immediate patrol hiring freeze, canceling new cadet classes, and cutting the budget for the expansion of surveillance infrastructure. I also support cutting the patrol budget as the NYPD has extended their reach into civic institutions where they have no place and frequently abuse those they interact with. We must remove armed police officers from public transit, homeless outreach, and mental health response. I will also advocate for state legislation that would prohibit law

enforcement from using tear gas or other chemical agents for crowd control and ban law enforcement from receiving certain military surplus equipment from the federal government. In addition, I support bolstering implicit bias training and working to ensure implicit bias experts and trained psychologists administer the training rather than individuals with limited expertise. I will also push for legislation to require an independent body, in coordination with the NYPD, Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, City Commission on Human Rights and industry experts, to identify and create standards for implicit bias training with a goal of changing biased behavior using concrete strategies and ensure any implicit bias training meets those standards and industry best practices.

## 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**

Although rules reform in 2014 helped advance a more transparent body, more steps must be taken through another rules reform process to ensure a better, more efficient, more democratic entity.

### **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?**

As incoming Council Members, we must be organized to ensure that the "unwritten rules" of the body do not erode healthy dissent. As an incoming Council Member with relationships with many candidates, I will ensure that I use my relationships to elect a Speaker who does not abide by business as usual, while building an environment that does not condone this type of behavior.

**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?**

COVID-19 has exposed how few New Yorkers have access to reliable wifi and internet accessible devices. Throughout the pandemic we have seen how this inequity has played out in children not being to attend remote school, particularly students of color. We need to create a public broadband system that goes beyond the current state proposal for a \$15 option - wireless internet must be free. In terms of government processes, remote meetings helped many people participate in hearings and public meetings that otherwise required folks to show up in person. Remote access allows working people, people with disabilities and non-English speakers to more readily participate in public discourse because transportation, time and

language access can be remedied. We must maintain some aspect of the ease that remote technology creates for New Yorkers, but ensure that real access to technology is facilitated by the city.

## 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 the City plans for a just recovery in response to COVID-19, we know that "returning to normal" is not good enough. It is crucial that in our recovery we strengthen worker protections, provide the necessary resources for our schools, and expand our public resources. We must prioritize the following:

Continue to advocate for the rights of those participating in the growing gig economy so that more money goes into the hands of workers, rather than to companies who operate their platforms;

Build an education & training ecosystem for the displaced workforce & marginalized communities;  
Focus on employment programs & opportunities that meet immediate relief efforts fit for a 21st century workforce;

Rebuild our City's economy through public works & direct public employment by investing in accelerated public projects that rebuild our City's public infrastructure, and hiring and New Yorkers to get the job done;

Focus recovery efforts on local small businesses & nonprofits, and support for new business development with attention to bolstering contract opportunities for gig workers; and

Partner with trusted advocates working with independent workers to ensure that the workforce knows their rights on the job.

Provide funding in the city budget to ensure all schools are equipped with social workers, guidance counselors, and other adult support staff (rather than law enforcement officers) to ensure students receive the targeted support they need as we emerge from the pandemic.

Repurpose our COVID-19 hotel isolation program — including veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and domestic violence survivors —

and creating a wraparound short-term hotel stay program by partnering with at least 10 hotels in each borough.

Create a free, publicly-owned wireless internet network, in partnership with existing organizations like NYC Mesh and skilled technicians like the Charter Spectrum technicians who have been on strike since March 2017, to ensure all New Yorkers have access to high-speed, reliable internet.

**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.**

As a staunch advocate for Ranked Choice Voting as mentioned above, I have been a partner to many good government groups who are getting the word out about RCV this cycle. I have been an active participant in public forums held by the New York City Campaign Finance Board to provide direct feedback as to how the CFB can better administer the program. I served as a partner to countless police reform organizations during my time as First Deputy Public Advocate for Community Engagement in Public Advocate Jumaane Williams' office, working hand in hand with advocates to build a true inside/outside strategy on police reform and justice for communities who have been harmed by police abuse.

**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: Education: Every young person in our City deserves access to a high-quality, comprehensive education that meets their needs. We must implement universal, free childcare to all families across New York City. The implementation of UPK, expansion of 3K and now, DOE's role in implementing Early Learn demonstrates that a seamless, 0-3 system is possible, and that universal programs at scale not only are the greatest contributors to educational equity, but are within reach. Implement the full set of recommendations put forth by the DOE's School Diversity Advisory Group to ensure racial equity is central to the DOE's enrollment strategy; Remove law enforcement officers from K-12 schools and expand restorative justice programs across the DOE, as well as increase teacher diversity to mirror the student population; and Ensure students with IEPs receive a quality education, access to services and protections against discrimination.

Second: Affordable housing: There is likely no greater issue that unites most New Yorkers than access to affordable housing. A central reason that I am running for City Council because I believe that everyone deserves a truly affordable and safe place to live. Over the last several years, we have seen the abysmal lack of moral courage by our City's leadership to build truly affordable housing for New Yorkers experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. The numbers don't lie: over 60,000 New Yorkers sleep in shelters per night, and the economic impact of the current pandemic has only exacerbated housing insecurity. And yet, this administration has spent the last several years focused on building and preserving housing that has never been accessible to people experiencing homelessness. Land use and zoning are one of the Council's most important powers. New York City's Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP) is intentionally opaque, leaving it almost impossible for anyone other than private developers and lobbyists to intervene. Rezoning in our City have decimated communities across the boroughs with little to no meaningful input from residents. Development projects like Atlantic Yards/Pacific Park, right here in District 35, have pushed longtime residents out and created chaos, endless construction, and little accountability for those who remain. My agenda to build a City where all New Yorkers can secure an affordable, safe place to live is as follows: Strengthen and enforce the recently expanded tenant protections that were passed at the State level, including expanding the right to counsel to all tenants in New York City who seek representation in housing court; Commit to full funding of NYCHA and the \$38 billion needed over the next three years; Reform ULURP to balance local and citywide needs, including measures to better incorporate data, context, and citywide planning goals, as well as require processes that engage and bind proposals to community input; Radically revise Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) to expand affordability beyond 20% and retain public land for public housing, rather than privatization; Advocate for a Homes Guarantee at the local level; and Build, maintain, and equitably distribute affordable housing that's actually affordable to New Yorkers experiencing the greatest housing insecurity in every neighborhood across New York City.

Third: Shifting away from punitive justice and towards true community accountability: My long term vision for the criminal justice system in New York City is one that treats those interacting with the system as humans worthy of care and compassion; centers the experiences and leadership of victims of police violence and their families; and keeps police as far away from our youth as possible. In order to execute this vision, I will work with fellow Council Members to: Continue to decriminalize low-level offenses and ensure fewer people interact with the system to begin with; Push for demilitarization and defunding of the NYPD, and stricter oversight of law enforcement; Support the legalization of recreational marijuana, tied to a community-informed system for using revenue to support communities historically impacted by over policing; Address gun violence as the public health crisis that it is and secure funding for cure violence groups and community-based programs; Center the experiences and leadership of victims of domestic violence to strengthen the fabric of our services and further educate the public to ensure responsiveness; and Ensure that police are out of New York City schools, hospitals, and

## 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?**

In 2013, I was a young professional working and living in Washington, D.C. when my mother first started exhibiting signs of Alzheimer's disease. As the only child of a single mother, I spent an entire year traveling back and forth every weekend to tend to my mother's needs, until I was finally able to return home to Brooklyn to care for her. It was through this caregiving experience that I was called to public service, knowing that families like mine shouldn't have to struggle as much as we have to ensure that our loved ones can age safely and in place. I am re-envisioning and re-imagining what this city might look like when it centers marginalized people – Black and Brown people, immigrants and undocumented folks, single parents, women, LGBTQ and TGNC identified folks, and those living with chronic conditions and disabilities. It is time for those who have always been closest to the pain to not only have a seat at the table, but to reclaim their power. If elected, I would be the first openly gay Black woman elected to the New York 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).