



Monday, May 10, 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Renee Collymore

Running for Council District number

35

In which primary

Democratic

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

Democratic

Age**Education**

College

Occupation/Employer

Self

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Elected Democratic District Leader and State Committee member, Head of Block Association, Founder of the Parliament Democratic Club, Member of the C.A.B for The Brooklyn Hospital, Founded Neighborhood Watch Patrol, Civic Education Teacher, Served on the Executive board of the 88th Precinct Community Council, tenant organizer

Campaign Contact Information**Website**

www.reneecollymore2021.com

Twitter

@reneecollymore

Facebook

Renee Collymore

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 will hold monthly District Town Hall meetings, set up a constituent services hotline, hold Meet Me Monday with morning hours at a train station and evening hours in office. I will have a liaison visit the homes of senior citizens to assist with requests. As constituent services is the most important portion of the office, it would be priority to maintain a top notch department. We will be wheelchair accessible and disabilities. We will have a multi-language staffer.

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

We will create a COVID Hotline for requests for masks and other PPE items, as well as being able to provide a resourceful office to offer information about vaccination sites and COVID testing. We will set up testing sites all over the 35th district and send

educational materials to district residents.

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

All of my life.

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

NYC 's First Tiny House Village for the Homeless

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?

First of all, they need an updated and improved Systems Management. They need to be reformed. The BOE should not put voter registration applications in a box...voter registration information should immediately be put into their computer system. I would create another warehouse in Brooklyn beside only being in Red Hook. I would use my power to fight for the position as Deputy Chief Clerk should be an elected position. I would like to see an increase in employee salaries and I would use some funding to support an updated look in the Brooklyn BOE and for more staff to answer the phones.

The board of elections has long been plagued by issues that have directly impacted city government (election results) and have neglected all areas of New York city including and especially areas that are disenfranchised because they are minority communities. The three areas that I would ensure receive attention and accountability from my office are; systems and management. 2. Outreach and education for public outreach for elections 3. Bridging the gap between non profits and watch dog groups such as citizen union to allow for more direct participation in the inner workings of the BOE and to start eliminating politics from BOE administrations.

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 do consider myself a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting and in order to maintain it, we must provide educational materials throughout the year of elections. I would support producing a PSA to help further the understanding of Ranked Choice Voting, as I, too, supported it in the referendum.

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 appoint responsible members who have lived in the district a considerable amount of time, a person who have some level of community engagement and/or leadership in the district. One who will not favor protecting and redrawing lines of incumbents because of any relationship or the like. I would push of an equal number of every gender, racial and religious representation of our district.

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

I wholeheartedly support non-partisan elections. Over the course of years, I've met many non-democratic voters who wanted to vote for me in a primary, but could not because of partisan elections. It would save the City of New York financial resources and time

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

As the City Council is comprised of 51 members who live in the district throughout our City, in feel that it is imperative to have the Members advise and consent because they are the ones who can see more of what's happening on the ground. Many who have been actually in the trenches fighting for justice in their communities anyway. Members who the averageneighborhood, who happened to be able to get elected bring the voices of their neighborhood the City Hall. They would have more insight as to how to offer advice and solutions for accountability.

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?

This answer is out of the box, but we should first conduct public polling in some instances to hear and consider public opinion...such as in the case of Eric Garner. The only way to ensure accountability would be through legislation and strong enforcement. I would support an outside independent oversight committee
Bottom line ... everything should be decided by the people. A Government Of the People, By the People and For the People.

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

For sure. A consolidation would also cut down on bureaucratic red tape that is major deterrent in our City.

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

Definitely...we need as many eyes viewing evidence and footage to be able to make an informed conclusion as to what took place.

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 feel that we should strip officers of their pensions as a strong way to hold them accountable and to send a straight and clear message to other officers, to think twice before shooting and killing unarmed people and/or enacting unnecessary citizen harassment.

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

If the Member have strong support on a bill, there should be no need for the Speaker to intervene because his words alone would influence some members NOT to vote the way they believe, but

would vote based on his approval of a matter...maybe for fear of receiving funds for the district and/other retributions.

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

Yes

Comments

Yes, also because many committees mean that Members must spend more time in the chambers than being present in their districts. Residents always appreciate seeing their Member in the district, even if it means simply supporting a local business getting coffee in the morning.

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

Yes, because lobbying is a business.

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?

I would balance control by legislation. The Speaker him or herself should be legally punished for inflicting fear or "punishing" Council Members for not "going along to get along" because this overrides the definition of democracy and the meaning of why people run to get elected in the first place.

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 certainly ensure that all residents are able to access the internet and have free wifi to be able to participate and have public viewings of Hearing in local Community centers, outside in local parks in the warm climates and large screens in churches.

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 push for federal funding for more State funding for our MTA, hospitals and create true affordable housing based on the AMI of only the immediate neighborhood and not outside of the five boroughs. We need to tax the rich and make sure that they pay their fair share. We can also cut the extreme high salaries of corporate executives in NYC. Create charity opportunities for struggling small businesses asking online shoppers to donate a small amount to a named local business, movie theater, bowling alley and the like.

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 longtime activist and advocate, I would often speak at Roll Call, at our local Police Precincts, to address accountability and would hold monthly community meetings to discuss voting and elections, especially, as I was the Democratic District Leader, which was our main role and responsibility. Recently, I fought the City of New York to explain the reasoning behind a neglected decades old restroom on the Northside of Ft Greene Park, which is located near the residents of Ft Greene Public Housing. I stood up for the residents as they asked me to fight for a new renovation to encourage more quality time in the Park with friends and family. I thought that it was a wonderful idea given that the bad air quality in Public Housing, so fighting for a dignified and

respectful restroom would ensure Park usage by NYCHA residents and would offer healthier living. So, we held the Parks Department accountable for this hazardous restroom and through this fight, I was able to secure Capital funding from the Borough President's Office for the renovation from the 2022 NYC budget.

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.

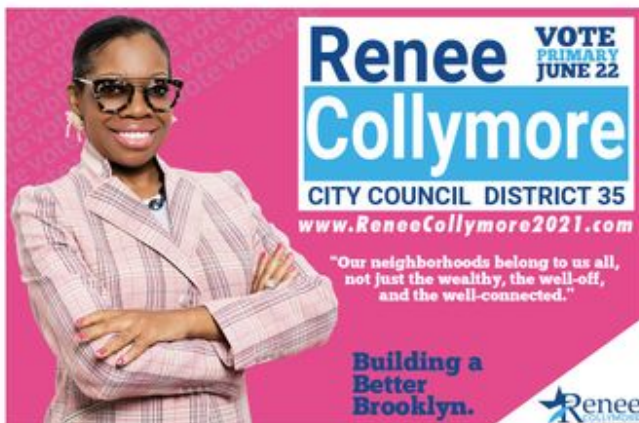
First: NYC First Tiny House Village for the Homeless

Second: Medicare for All

Third: 100% Affordable Housing Developing

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 family has lived in Ft Greene/Clinton Hill since the 1940s. My dad was from the British West Indies and my mom the South. I am a small business owner. I selected the first black Supreme Coury Justice in Staten Island. I am the newest instructor at Medgar Evers College. I Co-Sponsored a benefit for Hurricane Sandy Relief, I Co founded a local non profit, with my dad, since I was a teenager. I worked in my family business all of my life. Fighting against violence in the medical field against black women...doctors have admitted to teaching their students not to take the pain of black women seriously. I support Pathway Apprenticeship

Programs from labor unions. I support 100% Fully funded Public Schools. Civic Education should be formally placed back into our school system. Healthcare workers should get hazard pay, raises, bonuses and incentives. Small landlords should not be subject to liens if they have trouble paying their Water and Sewage taxes.

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.