



Wednesday, May 5, 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Douglas Mark Schneider

Running for Council District number

39

In which primary

Democratic

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

Democratic

Age

45

Education

JD, Cardozo Law School; BA, Union College

Occupation/Employer

Schneider Law PLLC

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Democratic District Leader, 44th Assembly District; Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats; Brooklyn Young Democrats; Lambda Independent Democrats; GOBK By Day; New York County Lawyers' Association; New York Bar Association; Former Trustee, Park Slope Civic Council; District Steering Committee, Councilmember Brad Lander's participatory budgeting initiative; lay leader, Congregation Beth Elohim, where I was the volunteer coordinator for the shabbat morning kids program and currently sit on its school reopening task force.

Campaign Contact Information**Website**

<https://dougshneiderbk.com>

Twitter

@dougshneiderbk

Facebook

@dougshneiderbk

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.

There is nothing more fundamental to the job of a City Councilmember than providing excellent constituent services. Councilmembers must be problem solvers for their constituents; provide constant, clear & transparent communications; and be responsive to every member of the community. As City Councilmember, my constituent services will be centered on my belief that the job of government is to meet people where they are.

The 39th Council District is very linguistically diverse. As a Councilmember, I will ensure that people with limited English language proficiency are given essential information in their native language, especially during times of crisis. My staff will be multilingual and culturally competent. I will open a second office in the Kensington/Boro Park part of the district and implement mobile office

hours all over the district. I will have an emergency hotline so that people can reach my office after-hours in case of an emergency.

Every member of my staff, including my legislative/policy staff will be required to spend a certain percentage of time doing constituent services. I will have quarterly town halls and I will hold civic meetings and town halls on various days, at various times of day, to ensure that people who work irregular hours or cannot make meetings in the evenings are not left out. Meetings will also be available virtually to allow people who cannot be present to participate.

My office will do affirmative outreach via email, texts, phone calls, canvassing, and social media. In addition to the traditional ways to contact my office, I will be accessible to constituents through social media. My office will accept constituent requests via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and whatever comes next.

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

As Democratic District Leader, in July 2020, I was one of the first elected officials to host a town hall with the Department of Education regarding its school reopening plan. The 44th Assembly District has a large number of Bangla, Urdu, and Russian speakers. When the DOE refused to provide live interpretation of the town hall, I organized simultaneous interpretation in each language.

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

15 years

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

I would require the Dept. of Sanitation to clear curb cuts and crosswalks sufficient for a wheelchair to be able to pass through whenever it snows.

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 Board of Elections should be a professional, non-political, overseer of fair elections. However, for far too long, the Board of Elections has been used as a patronage mill for powerful members of the Council and the County political parties. I am proud that as Democratic District Leader for Brooklyn's 44th Assembly District, and before, I have been fighting to professionalize the Board of Elections, eliminate patronage hires, and ensure greater language access at the polls. I will continue this fight as a member of the City Council.

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 do support Ranked Choice Voting. I believe it is essential that NYC have the funds and technology to best implement the system. It is vital to educate people about how Ranked Choice Voting actually works. It is especially important for the Board of Elections to provide education and training in all the languages spoken in New York City. For example, The 39th Council District is especially diverse. We have Bengali, Urdu, Yiddish, and Russian speaking neighbors. NYC must make as much effort to educate these voters as voters who speak English.

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?

Accountability is supposed to be at the ballot box. Dissatisfied constituents can express their dissatisfaction with their votes. However, Gerrymandering undermines that ability. The ability for a politician to chose their voters instead of voters choosing their representatives undermines a basic tenet on our legislative and electoral structures.

My focus in appointing members to the

commission would be diversity in background, and geography. The commission should reflect the makeup of the City.

I believe the most important consideration in considering proposed district maps is ensuring that communities are not divided into multiple districts, thereby diluting their political power.

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

With Ranked Choice Voting, the major arguments against an open primaries disappear.

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

I believe decentralizing the appointment of the Police Commissioner will make it harder for outside forces, like the PBA and SBA, to influence the choice through pressure tactics.

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?

As a civil rights and criminal defense attorney for over a decade, I have seen firsthand the over policing of communities of color, particularly in the

Black community. I understand the root causes, big and small, of the NYPD's unaccountable misconduct. From this experience, I have a comprehensive criminal justice platform focused on creating accountability, reallocation of resources, and decarceration.

We need to enact laws that hold NYPD officers accountable for their conduct in the streets and their perjury in the courts. This means removing final say on disciplinary issues from the NYPD Commissioner and moving it to a truly neutral body, whether the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings, the CCRB, or some other new or existing agency. It also means tracking and imposing real consequences officers whose testimony is found incredible in court.

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

Getting rid of this redundancy will make oversight more efficient and is just common sense.

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.

In addition to the above, we need to eliminate the agencies and institutions that incentive arrests and over-policing. One of the prime examples is the

office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor. Not only was the Special Narcotics Prosecutor created as part of the racist “war on drugs,” but it certainly has no place in a City that has changed its understanding and approach to narcotics and other drugs.

The NYPD’s participation in federal military surplus programs means that they can show up to peaceful protests heavily armed with military grade equipment. This creates violence, it doesn’t stop it. The NYPD should be forbidden from participating in these programs and should eliminate its current stock.

I support reallocating resources from the NYPD budget to agencies and programs that provide social services, particularly in communities of color. This should include, but not be limited to, Summer Youth Employment Programs, investments in affordable housing, education, homeless services, mental health, aging, local community groups, and small business, particularly minority/women owned businesses.

Finally, our policies, including our approach to the NYPD budget, should have as a goal eliminating the stranglehold Pat Lynch of the PBA and Ed Mullins of the SBA have on the City. These two men are the most destructive forces in New York City politics. They are propped up by the most senior, predominantly white, officers, most of whom live outside NYC. Our goal should be to uplift the voices of the newer, largely officers of color, who are from, and live in, the communities they police.

I believe the best approach is to achieve a reduction in the size and makeup of the NYPD through attrition. We need to implement policies that incentivize those NYPD officers living outside NYC to leave the force. To do so, I would support a law requiring NYPD officers to live in, or within a short distance from, New York City. If passed, I believe a large number of the officers who live outside of NYC would retire. Not only will this result in a police force that better represents NYC, but it will break the control these officers have over the police unions, and the City. This should be accompanied by a hiring freeze on new officers.

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

The Speaker should not have a de facto veto over legislation.

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?

Discretionary funding should be equitably distributed, not used to keep Council Members "in-line." Denying discretionary funding to dissenting Members is not a punishment for the Members. It

is a punishment for the people they represent. The non-profits that feed the hungry, the after-school programs that educate our children.

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?

Remote technology was essential to continuing government operations and education. However, reliance on remote technology also left tens of thousands behind. From lack of hardware, to lack of reliable broadband, to lack of familiarity, too many people could not take advantage of remote technology.

The people have a right to civically engage and reliance on remote engagement restricts that ability. It should only be in place for as long as scientifically justified. Regardless of how much longer we rely on remote technology as the primary means of community engagement, the digital divide must be addressed. Everyone should have access to broadband, the equipment to access it, and the training to understand 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 must find a way to increase revenue. The first answer must come from Albany. We need to raise taxes on the billionaires in NY. But there are still ways the City can grow revenue or reduce expenditures or change our budgetary priorities.

First and foremost - reform the NYPD. Significantly reduce its budget. Bring real discipline and accountability to the NYPD. The City spends between \$200-\$400 million a year in settlements and judgements in police misconduct cases. To put that in perspective, that amount more

than covers the entire budget for the Summer Youth Employment Program.

We can stop outsourcing City work and contracts. There are literally billions of dollars spent every year in this city on outside contractors instead of doing that work with city workers. Likewise, through procurement reform we can make it easier for locally run small businesses, especially MWBEs, to win city contracts. Even if that is cost neutral it will mean more spent locally in the city and more jobs. All of that means more tax revenue.

We need to reduce the burdens on small businesses, particularly in the hospitality industry, which is a major driver of tourism and NYC's economy, or they won't survive. To do this, we have to address the biggest liabilities of most small businesses including, taxes, rent, and utilities.

Our recovery must be equitable, prioritize historically underserved communities, and close the gender wage gap. We need to train workers and prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow. The economy we rebuild must be equitable, racially and gender inclusive, and green. We need to fully reopen schools and get working parents, particularly working mothers, back to work. My comprehensive economic recovery plan can be viewed at bit.ly/Doug4justrecovery. My 10-point plan for closing the gender-wage gap can be viewed at bit.ly/Doug4EqualPay.

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 had significant experience fighting for good government, transparency, and reform. As Democratic District Leader, I have been at the forefront of the fight to fundamentally reform the Brooklyn Democratic Party (for example, bit.ly/3eXPG83), the Board of Elections, and how we elect judges. I have been a frequent contributor to the Gotham Gazette on reform issues. For example, bit.ly/3unosyq; bit.ly/3vGzjUi.

As a criminal justice reform advocate for close to 2 decades, I have fought and lobbied for vital criminal

justice reforms including ending stop and frisk, raising the age of criminal responsibility, and bail and discovery reform.

Although not specifically related to good government, I was appointed to a three-year term on the ethics committee of the New York City Bar.

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: Fully open schools and make sure our students have the supports they need to recover from the harm of remote learning. Make sure every school has child psychiatrists, social workers, and/or other professionals to deal with the significant deficits in social and emotional development and mental health caused by COVID-19.

Second: Address street safety. My comprehensive transportation and street safety platform can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/Doug4SafeStreets>.

Third: Economic recovery as detailed above.

ADDITIONAL INFO

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



Doug Schneider Transportation Platform.Fina...



Doug Schneider economic recovery platform...



Schools platform Final.pdf

What else would you like us to know about yourself?

I believe leadership means being accountable to, and supported by, grassroots movements, communities, and organizations. I was raised by parents who instilled in me the values of volunteerism and community service. These are the

same values my wife Joni and I are teaching our children. Joni and I are both former Trustees of the Park Slope Civic Council, served on the District Committee for Brad Lander's participatory budgeting initiative, and are community leaders at our synagogue, Congregation Beth Elohim.

If you want to know what type of leader I will be, I can point to my time as a District Leader on the Kings County Democratic Committee.

I forced out a 40+ year member of the Executive Committee in 2018 and since then have been a strong voice for reform. Since being elected, I (1) took on the Party Chair Frank Seddio at my very first meeting as District Leader and followed my conscience when I challenged the vote totals in the election for Officers of the County Committee; (2) I introduced a series of amendments addressing proxy reform; meeting agendas; meeting minutes; and the conduct of meetings; (3) I have fought against the corrupt way we elect judges in this state and supported qualified judges who would increase much needed diversity on the judiciary, including a Muslim woman who would have been the first Supreme Court Justice to wear a Hijab; (4) I have challenged the Board of Elections about its refusal to provide increased language access at the polls; (5) I have led the opposition to, and voted against, every single anti-democratic effort by the Executive Committee; and, (6) as a member of the Brooklyn Democratic Party's Task Force on Gender and Gender Identity, I am proud to have fought against and denounced the Party's exploitation of the TGNCNB community to perpetrate a naked power grab and passed an amendment proposal which removes the barriers to TGNCNB participation.

In the coming days, I will be releasing 2 more policy platforms, Constituent Services & Seniors Issues.

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.