



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](#).

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

We thank you very much for your response.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Your Info

Name

Mamnun Haq

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

58

Education

College

Occupation/Employer

NYU

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Co-founded the New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA), the largest cab driver union in the country, and worked to organize over 20,000

Campaign Contact Information**Website**

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

Twitter**Facebook****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 would make sure that there are specific liaisons to each part of the district both ethnically and geographically. From my time as a community healthcare organizer I have seen first hand what having an proactive role in managing healthcare needs can do. I would make sure that we have a staffer who is able to educate and address healthcare issues that all the different parts of the community face in a culturally competent way.

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?

Over 25 years

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

Housing has to be affordable. As a renter in NYC for almost 30 years, Mamnun understands the profound need for cost-effective housing and rent. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic insecurity is a looming issue for New Yorkers, many

of whom are unable to afford rent and face evictions. Mamnun wants to ensure that we invest in building more affordable housing throughout the city and increase economic opportunities for low income residents. He will also push city government to strengthen rent regulations by investing in public and subsidized housing, strengthening rent stabilized housing, and preserving existing affordable housing. Above all, Mamnun wants to ensure that public housing, subsidized housing, as well as marketplace rental units receive regular maintenance and repairs as required by the city.

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?

I would describe it as one that could be improved. While not necessarily a bad one, there needs to be clearer communication from one to the other while maintaining the balance of ensuring the incumbents do not have undue influence during elections.

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 support it the major thing and also helped champion the issue as well. I would make sure we increase voter education with additional funding in the next two years to expand direct voter education from the city on how rank choice voting works through not only mail, but online/digital content and would like to see videos in multiple languages in particular walking voters through it.

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 want to see districts drawn by a

commission whose gender and racial parity reflect the city itself as well as the languages spoke by the commission itself. With district changes one of the most important factors, outside of ensuring that is done fairly and by a group that reflects the diversity of the city itself, is understanding the communities that we are dividing up. Making sure we have people who can literally speak the language and understand our diverse city should be part of that.

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?

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.

Reform and Reallocate from the NYPD in a substantial way – While the Mayor of New York announced a reallocation of \$1 billion from NYPD to youth programming and community services, research indicates that much of this was a one-time reduction which may not reflect in future budgets. Instead, funding needs to be reallocated through personnel reduction and reduction in spending on equipment. I will propose that reallocated funds be used to fund a city-wide community health workers network which both provides gainful employment to local residents and enables accessible, community-oriented preventative healthcare to communities of color.

Demilitarize the police – It is unreasonable for police to have and use military grade equipment on civilians. If elected, I will vote against purchase of any equipment classified as 'military grade' by its manufacturers.

Get Police out of School – I will support transferring school safety from NYPD to the

Department of Education.

Reform the Trial System / End Cash Bail and pre-trial incarceration – Before New York enacted progressive bail reform in 2019, there were roughly 8,000 people in jail in NYC on any given day. Out of these, 60% were in jail pretrial. Ending cash bail and pretrial incarceration for most offenses is an important way to ensure that people aren't being punished for being poor. However, pushback from the NYPD has led to a reversal of much of the reform. As Council Member I will work towards reinstating bail reforms and effectively ending pretrial incarceration for most offenses. It is worth noting, for example, that New Jersey similarly eliminated cash bail for most offenses in 2014, and the experience has been successful in reducing pretrial incarceration without leading to a spike in crime.

Pre-trial assistance – Our trial system is notoriously hard to navigate, especially for working people or people who do care work. I will work with community organizations such as the Bail Project to assist the process of setting up court dates for trial, and help people appear for court dates by providing childcare assistance and transportation.

Non-police alternative to 911 – Set up an alternative response system which employs medical specialists and social workers for health crises (especially mental health crises), homelessness and addiction.

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?

No

Comments

Making sure that some issues that might be seen as more niche have a home to go to is key to ensuring we are serving all new yorkers.

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?

I would want to see more of that budget shifted into being part of participatory budget system spread equally across the city. From running the participatory budget system in my district in the past I have seen first hand the positive impact that can have. While not all of it being taken away from the speaker to maintain city wide allocation, having a portion put forth towards a larger PB project can make New Yorkers as a whole more involved in how our money is spent.

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 think that our recent shift to remote working and learning have shown deep gaps in our technological needs and inequality in it as well.

We need to expand education on how to use these technologies as well as access if we want to ensure equal participation. The city needs to expand programs like library wifi hotspot rentals which allow those who cannot afford wifi in their homes borrow a hotspot from the library, but this is only a short term solution. We need to seriously look at a citywide public wifi option and laptops for students so that we can make sure all New Yorkers have equal access to education and their needs no matter what.

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?

Ultimately the economic recovery needs to start with securing workers rights. Strengthen worker protection laws to address systemic abuses like violation of environmental and safety standards. Strengthen legal protections for the right to organize and collectively bargain without fear of retaliation. Provide hazard pay to frontline workers. Create a citywide fund that supports undocumented workers. A District for Workers Set up bi-weekly free clinics throughout the District together with organizations like Make the Road NY to recover unpaid wages, access workers compensation benefits, and address health and safety violations. Provide free training to workers regularly on critical health and safety issues and rights. Provide free legal support when workers confront violations on the job. Enforce protections from being fired without 'just cause.' Protection for Gig Workers Help put yellow cab drivers back to work by forgiving predatory loans for medallions,

decreasing medallion transfer fees, and lowering medallion lease costs. Provide full employment status to gig economy workers, including critical protections like paid sick leave, unemployment benefits, right to collective bargaining. Fund NYC Health + Hospitals and community based clinics to provide low cost healthcare for uninsured workers. Many workers' incomes are often just above the threshold for medicaid but unable to afford market rates. Build a health and wellness fund for drivers by adding a small meter surcharge similar to how the MTA receives funds through yellow cabs
Generating Jobs Allocate funds for workforce development, adult education and job training opportunities to enhance the skills needed to acquire dignified employment. Allocate funding for Community Health Workers, who can be recruited every ten blocks. This will create a strong, grassroots network that will generate jobs, strengthen community health, and fight healthcare disparities.

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.

In terms of reforms I have fought for reforms to the Taxi and Limousine commission so that they would more fairly treat the drivers of this city and have fought for legislation to give drivers much needed additional protections.

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: Expanding Education: Accessible Wifi, Services and Content Wifi for every student is a bare necessity for education during the time of pandemic and henceforth. To start with we need to utilize the resources provided by NYC Department of Education to the fullest. The Free wifi program will also look at the possibilities of Community WiFi for public education in our neighbourhoods (<https://www.nycmesh.net/blog/how/>) Reallocate funds to improve educational services in terms of technology accessibility by providing tablets and other devices. The fund needs to be reappropriated to create content in native language of students as well as an inclusive web interface for parents to support their children. Education should also surpass age barriers and look at possibilities of evening classes, remote education using the internet or text messages for the working class and elderly in need. These education can start from life skills to navigate NYC transit to skill building and language training. Capacity Building/Reinforcement in Public Education Providing additional support in public schools through nonprofits invested in inclusive education thus increasing the potential of each and every student in the class. The high schools in Brooklyn provide the least number of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. We need to provide more certified CTE programs in our public schools to prepare students for both college and a career after high school The current scenario of employability in NYC calls for employment centers to have stronger ties with colleges and universities (with a focus on the City University of New York [CUNY]) for training and development, targeting the growing economic sectors. Understanding the context of education An education/employment audit in our neighbourhoods will provide a detailed report of skills attained through current education facilities and to the extent those skills can be transferred for employment The audit can be further linked to explore the opportunities in starting business ventures but strategically creating associations with local incubators and other entrepreneurship support systems. The audit can further be mapped to the opportunities available at city, state and federal level for Women and minority owned businesses. Public education goes beyond student and classes Ensuring the safety of teachers and equipping them with proper gadget training and personal development to adapt to these changing circumstances. These training and development workshops need to be paid respecting the time each teacher dedicates to it. This can be achieved and enforced through teacher's unions. The vaccination of the teachers also needs to be addressed with high priority. Child Care services for children of frontline workers, as the city is planning to reopen schools full time or in shifts. Not all public schools in our neighbourhood are gifted with wealthy PTAs. In the less fortunate schools more fundraising initiatives need to be deployed. The school or the PTAs there can partner with nonprofits or voluntary groups to create a strategic fundraising model.

Second: Support Affordable Housing: NYC needs to protect renters, make ownership affordable, and eliminate homelessness—by making housing a fundamental right for all New Yorkers. Protection for Renters Mobile housing clinics every week within every District resident's 10 minute walking distance, for education for renters about tenant rights, and free legal counsel and access to other legal resources. Cancel all rent fully and automatically from the start of the crisis to its conclusion. Cancel back rent for tenants and penalize 'money judgement' rent extortion by landlords. Make the rent moratorium permanent. Expand eligibility for rent relief to include everyone who cannot afford it, irrespective of immigration status. Raise fines for negligent landlords. Use tax policy to curb speculative behavior by landlords and lenders. Reduce administrative and financial hurdles for basement apartment conversion. Community Ownership and Small Landlords Advance tenant, nonprofit, and public acquisition of distressed rental buildings, thus creating a pipeline for social housing development. Grant small landlords priority access to landlord relief funds. Support small landlords with mortgage forgiveness. Homelessness Push for a reliance on shelter or temporary housing to mandate permanent housing. Meet the immediate survival needs of those living on the street. End all law enforcement sweeps, diversion, and targeting of homeless New Yorkers. Use vacant hotels and SRO's to ensure safety for those in shelters and on the street. Enforce safety measures 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?

Mamnun knows first-hand the challenges of everyday New Yorkers.

His experience marries grassroots organizing and institutional knowledge. Mamnun has been a labor organizer, a public health advocate, an immigrant, and a working class New Yorker - and it's time our district elects someone that reflects someone who truly understands these issues.

After immigrating to the United States from Bangladesh in 1991, Mamnun began driving a yellow cab to make ends meet. He quickly realized that cab drivers, like many wage workers, were exploited, underpaid, and mistreated. He co-founded the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, the largest taxi cab union in the country, and spent 20 years fighting for drivers' rights.

He saw how little attention cab drivers received from city government so he took action:

1994 – 1996

Organized Bangladeshi cab drivers and formed the Bangladesh Yellow Society and co-founded the Bengal Cabbie Society, two organizations dedicated to providing monetary support and safety for Bengali cab drivers.

1998

Co-founded the New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA), the largest cab driver union in the country, and worked to organize over 20,000 members to negotiating fare raises, and advocating for drivers' health and safety.

1998, 2007

Co-organized two of the largest taxi strikes in NYC which led to improved working conditions and compensation for drivers.

2005 – 2014

Advocated for the Taxi Drivers Protection Act from

his hospital bed after his passenger suddenly stabbed him with a ten inch hunting knife in Brooklyn Heights. After 9 years of rallying and testifying, New York City finally approved the protection act in 2014.

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.