



Saturday, April 17, 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Julie Menin

Running for Council District number

5

In which primary

Democratic

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

Democrat

Age

53

Education

JD

Occupation/Employer

Former City Commissioner

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Census Director, Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, Commissioner of Media and Entertainment

Campaign Contact Information**Website**

juliefornyc.com

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/JulieMenin>

Facebook

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

Affirmations**Have you completed the required campaign finance filings?**

Yes

Have you qualified to receive matching campaign finance funds from the CFB?

Yes

Are you willing to be interviewed by Citizens Union's Local Candidates Committee?

Yes

(Please note: interviews are prerequisites for Citizens Union's endorsements)

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'AM' with a stylized flourish.

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.

As a former three-time city Commissioner, I have instituted a 24-hour response rule in all the offices I've led. Constituent services are a vital piece of elected office, and I would treat the inquiries of my constituents with the utmost diligence. If elected, I will continue bringing this policy with me to the City Council to ensure that the citizens of District 5 receive prompt, effective aid in navigating city services. I know all the city agencies inside and out so I will be able to quickly determine which agency and which department within that agency is best equipped to solve the problem. For example, if the issue is a small business that needs help accessing federal aid, I would directly connect that small business with the division of SBS that is aiding small businesses to complete the PPP forms. If the issue is a senior facing elder financial scams, I would connect them with the complaint division of DCWP. If the issue involves a question about homelessness, there are currently over 12 city agencies that address issues affecting the homeless (with DSS having the main mandate), so it is critical to truly understand the purview of each agency.

Having also served as a seven year Community

Board Chair, I understand community needs and how to quickly address community concerns. I know this district extremely well as I am a third generation resident here and have served this community and our city in public service for many years. I also serve as an adjunct professor at Columbia, where I teach a course on NYC government and its ability to address New Yorkers' needs.

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 the City Census Director, I led the highly successful effort to make sure all New Yorkers were counted. We beat almost every major city across the country. I created a community grants infrastructure where we granted to over 150 trusted community organizations, created over 250 neighborhood organizing census committees, and launched 34 media campaigns in 26 languages to address our immigrant communities across the city. An accurate census count is a crucial precursor to the accurate allocation of necessary federal and state funding. Conducting the census during the COVID-19 pandemic presented unique challenges, but I led our team to work intimately with community leaders, activists, and those that know marginalized communities best to ensure all New Yorkers received the services they need. In District 5, I worked with countless community organizations, faith based leaders, NYCHA leaders and others to ensure the community was properly counted.

I also worked on food distribution and mask distribution in our community and citywide as our census team partnered with the city's food distribution network to assist the city's most vulnerable.

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

I have lived in Council District 5 since 2014 and am raising my family here. I am third generation in this district as my mother was raised in the district and my grandmother lived here as well. My father still lives in the district.

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

The first bill that I would introduce if elected would

be ULURP reform to create a more equitable city that truly addresses the need for comprehensive planning to address affordable housing, school seats, transportation needs, hospitals and other critical needs and services. I would advocate a policy that reduces the need for community benefit agreements, as those agreements are often negotiated with groups that do not represent the needs of neighborhoods and are often done in a non-transparent way.

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?

If elected, I will hold the NYC Board of Elections accountable to make sure New York City elections are free and fair. The City Council needs to exercise its oversight functions regarding the BOE. To this point, New York has deeply concerning logistical inaccessibility in voting. I will work with the Board of Elections to reduce lines on election days and help voters get the resources they need to vote absentee, early, or in person. I would like to chair the Oversight and Investigations Committee and use my background as the former Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, Commissioner of Media and Entertainment, Census Director and former Executive Assistant Corporation Counsel at the NYC Law Department, to hold agencies' feet to the fire including BOE.

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. The city needs to do a far better job educating voters about this new system of voting. As someone who has launched extensive multilingual citywide outreach efforts such as the launch of the Paid Sick Leave law (as Consumer Affairs Commissioner) or the Census campaign, I know firsthand what both CFB and BOE need to do to truly educate New Yorkers in a culturally and linguistically appropriate citywide outreach campaign and would utilize the City Council's oversight functions to address this.

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 served as a Redistricting Commissioner in 2002 under Mayor Bloomberg and know this process inside and out. Moreover, as the city’s Census Director and Executive Assistant Corporation Counsel at the NYC Law Department, I have a deep understanding of these issues. I will aim to appoint a diverse redistricting commission of experts and community leaders to ensure that district lines accurately and equitably represent New York communities.

8. Now that New York City has implemented Ranked Choice Voting, do you support moving to an Open Primary system (eliminating party primaries and establishing a non-partisan election system)?

Yes

Comments

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Citizens Union has been studying police accountability and performance in New York City for more than a decade. In our reports and advocacy efforts we have urged city government to strengthen the accountability of the New York Police Department to the public and create a more cohesive system of police oversight. Previous reports include: [2016 issue brief](#), [2013 position brief on Stop and Frisk](#), [2012 report on the CCRB](#), [2008 policy statement on police misconduct](#). Citizens Union's 2021 agenda for police reform, [published as a report](#) in March, calls for establishing a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, allowing the CCRB to appeal the Police Commissioner’s decisions, making the appointment of Police Commissioner subject to advice and consent of the City Council, consolidating agencies with oversight authority, ending qualified immunity, and more.

9. Do you support making the appointment of the Police Commissioner subject to the advice and consent of the City Council?

Yes

Comments

10. Who do you think should have the final say on discipline in the police department? How

would you ensure penalties are imposed on police officers that commensurate with the gravity of their wrongdoing?

I serve on the Reform Council of the Vera Institute and have been involved in their work to institute reforms to our criminal justice system. I support efforts to have state legislation that creates a real accountability structure where final disciplinary authority is transparent and not swept under the rug. The CCRB should have final say on police disciplinary matters. To enable the CCRB to take on this new responsibility, we must expand its funding and resources and make serving on the board a full time job. Moreover, we need to ensure the CCRB's new public database of police disciplinary records are updated daily and provides a thorough description of the incident.

Furthermore, we need to make sure disciplined police officers are not able to escape accountability by just moving to the next town over. We need to make police discipline records truly public and have a national misconduct registry. I would accomplish this by advocating for the creation of a national misconduct registry. I would also advocate for lowering the standard for a federal monitor to be appointed and limiting qualified immunity.

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 believe it is absolutely possible to address both public safety and have meaningful criminal justice reform at the same time. These two imperatives are not mutually exclusive. Currently, up to 40 percent of calls to 911 are not about crime, yet we are sending police officers out to those calls, rather than trained experts. I believe we can move some functions-- routine paperwork, traffic and collision work, calls regarding homelessness, some mental health calls, etc.-- off of and out of the NYPD which will allow the NYPD to focus on combating crime, and ensure trained experts are sent out to address other issues not involving crime. Shifting these functions into the hands of mental health professionals, social workers, and other trained experts where appropriate will de-escalate situations before they turn violent and ensure that communities are policed equitably and fairly.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, I am in favor of an expanded and empowered CCRB, and of real transparency in police records, at both a local and national level. The CCRB's new public registry of disciplinary records must provide thorough and timely information. At a national level, we need to know what an officer has done not just while serving within the NYPD, but also within any force they may have worked for before coming to our city.

HOW CITY COUNCIL WORKS

One of the first items on the next City Council's agenda will be adopting its rules of proceedings. Those rules will have a substantial effect on the ability of lawmakers to advance their goals, and can send a signal to New Yorkers about elected officials' commitment to making the Council more representative, deliberative, accountable, and efficient. In the last decade, the Council took important steps to reform its rules, including a 2014 overhaul by then-Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and a 2018 administrative change by Speaker Corey Johnson. These reforms have made the body more democratic, given members a more meaningful role in the legislative process, ensured greater equity in the allocation of discretionary funding, and made drafting procedures more transparent. Still, more work is needed enable members to function more effectively and independently of the speaker, and to increase public participation.

14. Do you support allowing bills with strong support to go through the committee process and put to a vote on the floor without needing the permission of the speaker?

Yes

Comments

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

Yes

Comments

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?

While collegiality and order are important for a well-functioning City Council, it is absolutely unacceptable for a Speaker to hold New Yorkers hostage based on the positions of their Councilmembers. I am open to measures to be introduced to bolster consensus, but never at the expense of the right of Councilmembers to dissent.

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?

Through the end of the pandemic and beyond, the ability of New Yorkers to have their voices heard at City Hall is vital to our municipal government. I would support measures to host virtual forums, town halls, Q&As, etc. that would be live-streamed and promoted on city websites. These remote gatherings are imperative in this time of social distancing, but from an accessibility perspective, they would be a positive function to maintain after in-person activities resume as well.

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?

The city is in crisis right now. We must implement bold and impactful tactics to address record unemployment, shuttered cultural and tourist venues, retail store vacancies and the plight of small businesses, the precipitous drop in tourism, and the health crisis of COVID. I will use my unique experience having run three NYC agencies (Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, Commissioner of Media and Entertainment and as the city's former Census Director and a former small business owner and former Executive Board member of NYC & Co), relationships forged during over two decades of public and private sector experience, and understanding of how to get things done in this city to work with all stakeholders to make sure no one is left behind as we recover. As a former small business owner, I know firsthand the challenges of owning and operating a small business in New York City, especially during a time of crisis. After 9/11, I started a leading not-for-profit Wall Street Rising to help Lower Manhattan rebuild. I went to work to help small businesses across downtown recover when recovery seemed unimaginable. As Commissioner of Consumer Affairs for the city, I implemented 25 reforms to reduce burdens and fines on small businesses, and as Commissioner of Media and Entertainment, I launched multiple initiatives not only to increase film and TV production in the city to historic heights, but I also negotiated the deal to bring the Grammys back to NYC and launched the city's first AR/VR hub and Freelancers Hub.

The first priority on the road to full recovery is ensuring New Yorkers are vaccinated. Leveraging the relationships and networks I developed when I led the city's Census effort, I will work with the network of community groups and not for profits to ensure the city's vaccination efforts are more widespread and that we ensure our city is fully vaccinated.

We need to immediately do more to support our small businesses. First, as a lawyer, I would work with the city's bar association to create a team of pro bono attorneys who can immediately help our city's 240,000 small businesses access the federal PPP loans that are available, as few are doing so. Second, we need to eradicate fees for opening up new small businesses and lower fines across the board on small businesses. We should implement (as I did as Commissioner of Consumer Affairs) a cure period rather than an immediate violation and fine. I would address the Commercial Rent Tax which is hurting small businesses. As a former executive board member of NYC & Co, the city's marketing and tourism arm, I know that we need a robust advertising and marketing campaign that aggressively and creatively markets our city's small businesses, cultural institutions, and tourism spots. Marketing should be done at a local level to encourage New Yorkers and tri-state residents to dine in the city's restaurants, shop in our stores, go to a sporting arena, and visit tourist attractions, as well as target NYC & Co's international offices to bring back international tourism.

New Yorkers are facing crises right now. I understand and have dealt with these issues, the city government, and the solutions we need, and I will get to work on day one to ensure a strong recovery.

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 am proud to have served as a Board member of Citizens Union and to receive Citizen Union's Civic Leadership Award in 2011. I have worked on good government issues for two decades-fighting for participatory budgeting, reforms to the City Council to loosen the Speaker's hold on bills and funding to increase transparency and accountability, campaign

finance reform, redistricting reforms and countless other issues. I have served on the Reform Council of the Vera Institute which has taken a leading role in police accountability issues and the Close Rikers campaign. I have a two decade history on good government issues and reforms and am the only candidate in the race with a proven track record and history on these issues.

I have served as the City Census Director for New York. The Census is a vital pillar to our democracy, as well as a necessary step in the adequate appropriation of resources to New York. The 2020 census presented unprecedented challenges--the pandemic exacerbated existing mistrust of government workers, and the Trump administration actively worked to lower the count of immigrant communities. I worked as both the City's Census Director and Executive Assistant Corporation Counsel and we were a plaintiff on the historic citizenship case and I represented the City attending the US Supreme Court oral arguments of the citizenship case. I created a network of over 150 community based organizations to partner with my office on the census as well as over 250 neighborhood organizing census committees. Government works best when its leaders work for the people, and I am proud of my long and deep record to that effect.

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.

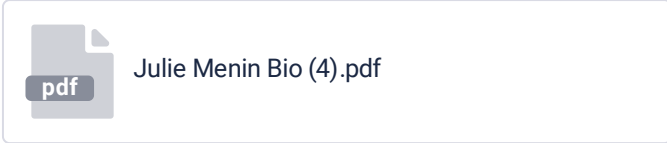
First: f elected, I will always be an accountable, responsive Councilmember for my constituents. My office will respond to any inquiries within 24 hours. See question 1.

Second: I will fight to help NYC recover from day one--see question 19

Third: I will work to make City government a more transparent, accountable institution--See questions 10-18

ADDITIONAL INFO

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



What else would you like us to know about yourself?

I am proud to have built the broadest, most diverse coalition of support in this race and have been endorsed by:

Congressman Jerry Nadler, Congressman Adriano Espaillat, Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez, State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, Former Governor David Paterson, Former Comptroller Carl McCall, Former Public Advocate Mark Green, Assemblyman Robert Rodriguez, Former City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, City Councilwoman Diana Ayala, City Councilwoman Carlina Rivera, The United Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO NYC Central Labor Council, Communications Workers of America, District 1, SEIU 32BJ, The Hotel Trades Council, AFSCME District Council 37, New York State Nurses Association, Freelancers Union, Teamsters Local 237, Theatrical Stage Employees Local One, Teamsters Local 831 - Uniformed Sanitationmen’s Association, #LaborStrong2021 Coalition, American Federation of Musicians - Local 802, Teamsters Local 817, CUNY Professional Staff Congress, New York Metro Area Postal Union, RWDSU, The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, UNITE HERE! Local 100, the 504 Democratic Club, Lexington Democratic Club, Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club, Upper East Side District Leader Cory Evans, Upper East Side District Leader Jake Dilemani, Upper East Side District Leader Eric Spencer, E. Harlem District Leader Harry Rodriguez, E. Harlem District Leader John Ruiz, E. Harlem District Leader Peggy Morales, E. Harlem District Leader Eddie Gibbs, Midtown District Leader Louise Dankberg, and hundreds of community, NYCHA, and other leaders in District 5.

You can read more about my background, my

positions, and my endorsements at
juliefornyc.com

You can watch a video introducing my campaign
here: <https://youtu.be/GIZJuN6zKMk>

You can watch a recent video of my campaign here:
<https://youtu.be/y-oT47IJVJM>

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.