



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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Rebecca Lamorte

Running for Council District number

5

In which primary

Democratic

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

Democratic conference and Progressive Caucus

Age

29

Education

Bachelor's Degree, Fordham University

Occupation/Employer

Legislative & Communications Coordinator, GNY
LECET

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

member, Manhattan Community Board 8

Campaign Contact Information**Website**

www.RebeccaLamorte.com

Twitter

@RebeccaLamorte

Facebook

/rebeccafornewyork

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.

Constituent services will be a top priority in my office, with multiple staff members assigned specifically to this work. I'll also hold weekly in person and virtual meetings on every Friday to have collaborative community conversation with my neighbors and be sure we're working on policies and issues important in our community. I will also hold weekly office hours on Roosevelt Island to bring services directly to residents on the Island.

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

I have not served as an elected official.

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

8 years

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

I would introduce legislation to create a housing affordability and development plan that includes truly affordable and supportive housing and included strong workforce requirements for this work.

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 Council has the power to change the political nature of the Board of Elections, improve transparency and functionality. While many election laws need to be changed at the state level, we can end the culture of nepotism and political appointments at what must be an independent entity.

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 supporter of Ranked Choice Voting. I've been educating my supporters on the importance of using RCV, ranking myself first and candidates in the race I've aligned with on a slate for the 2nd and 3rd ranked votes. To maintain RCV we need to continue educating New Yorkers on the new voting system. Following the 2021 elections, we need to also examine data on the use of RCV, rapidness of vote results, and how many New Yorkers ranked up to 5 candidates, ranked only 2 or 3, or voted exclusively for one candidate. After reviewing the data, we need to improve or change our education on RCV, rapidness of results, etc.

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?

We cannot allow redistricting to be a political exercise that harms communities and enforces oppressive, segregative systems in our city. We need independent redistricting to end the gerrymandering of districts and bring about truly free and fair elections. For appointments to the commission, I'll seek to have bipartisan representation from New Yorkers that includes

government ethics, voting and redistricting experts.

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?

New York City needs an elected Civilian Complaint Review Board that is the final authority on issuing disciplinary measures against police officers. We must end the current system of the NYPD Commissioner having final decision making authority over officer discipline.

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 defunding the police and want to see at least \$3 billion reallocated from their budget immediately in the next fiscal year budget. That money and work like traffic stops, homeless outreach, wellness check, mental health response, and school safety must be taken out NYPD control, with the longterm goal being a completely new public safety system.

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-Speater 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?

The Speaker must no longer have the control to penalize fellow Council Members for opposing views or votes. This practice harms communities in need of funding, housing and other services.

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?

While virtual meetings have allowed more New Yorkers to participate in Council and other public meetings, there's room for improvement. For example, increasing the time and ways New Yorkers can submit testimony and public comment on legislative hearings, community board and other public meeting. Additionally, we need to ensure all meetings, both in person and virtual, are fully accessible, including ASL interpretation and captions.

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 build back better and advance a strong infrastructure and public works program that uses city, state and federal funding to put New Yorkers to work on a variety of projects, public services and cultural programs. As a part of the recovery we also need to pass an eviction moratorium in perpetuity, cancel commercial and residential rents until the city fully reopens and increase funding for social services that support New Yorkers in need of food, rental assistance, internet access and other social services.

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'm currently working on campaign finance reform to amend the New York City public matching fund program to exempt language translation, accessibility and American Sign Language translation costs from the spending cap. Having these costs included in the cap prohibits candidates from running inclusive and fully accessible campaigns. The Campaign Finance Board rejected our initial petition and I am now in the process of having legislation introduced for the change.

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: Increasing the accessibility of our community and city

Second: Building more affordable and supportive housing

Third: Increasing funding for social and community-based services to empower New Yorkers in terms of housing, healthcare, education, childcare and other basic needs

ADDITIONAL INFO

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



R4NY - March (1).pdf

What else would you like us to know about yourself?

I have also been endorsed the Upper East Side Progressives, a local branch of NYPAN and Our Revolution in my district.

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.