



Thursday, September 21, 2023

## 2023 General Election Candidate Questionnaire - New York City Council

Citizens Union - Local Candidates Committee

Dear candidate,

Congratulations on your decision to run for a seat on the New York City Council! Citizens Union appreciates your commitment to serving the public.

This form includes six sections with questions about your positions on various reform issues and your plans for the office:

- Serving constituents
- Elections and voting
- Campaign finance
- Oversight of City Hall
- Police accountability
- City Council rules
- There are also questions about the candidate's bio and the campaign

Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for office and to issue our endorsement for the general election.

Read more about the method, principles, and criteria of the candidate evaluation process [here](#).

You can learn more about Citizens Union's policy agenda in our [issues section](#).

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**If you wish to be considered, please submit this questionnaire by Wednesday, September 20, 2023.**

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** at the bottom of every page. Once you submit the questionnaire, you will receive a confirmation email with your responses. Citizens Union cannot see your answers unless you submit the form.

You can also download a blank questionnaire [here](#) (.docx file) and email it to us.

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org)

We thank you very much for your response.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Candidate info

**Name** Benard Chow

**Running for Council District number**

**Age**

**Education**

**Occupation**

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

Community Activist Greeting. My name is Bernard Chow, and I am running for City Council District 23. I first

arrived in the United States from Hong Kong to attend college, and I have since stayed in New York City where I made it my home . I've been working in community outreach for more than 15 years. Since the onset of the pandemic, I've also taken on the role of a Healthcare Benefit Advisor. My work has exposed me to diverse communities and their specific challenges.

I am concerned that the governance of New York has less and less to do with common sense. In Asian culture, balance is an important concept that is relevant towards many aspects of life. Unfortunately, my belief is that in New York, government lacks a healthy balance. It favors criminals more than law abiding citizens. Health policies favor profits more than healing. Government is more concerned with allocating funding more than with solving problems. Government no longer values or supports people's achievements, or the sacrifices and self-discipline associated with acquiring knowledge and skills, and with achieving financial independence.

I hold the belief that every individual has the potential to embrace a personal mission. My mission involves bringing balance back to New York City and its government so that people can thrive, be healthy, be productive, contribute, live without fear of crime, corruption or oppression.

I support public safety, quality education, small business wellness, Managed Immigration, NO Local Law 97, and most importantly, community input. All of these necessitate Freedom of Speech, an unbiased and free press, mutual respect, and open communication, free from censorship.

Please vote for me, a person who has the same common values as the constituents of District 23, and endorsed by the Conservative, Republican, Medical Freedom, Common Sense, and Parent parties

**Website** <http://chowforny.com/about>

**Twitter** <https://twitter.com/ChowForNY>

**Facebook**

## Affirmations

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

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

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

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

## SERVING CONSTITUENTS

**1. For most New Yorkers, the most important thing their Council Members do is provide constituent services. How have you run your office (or for non-incumbents, how would you run your office) to serve your community's needs? Please give specific examples. What are the major problems in your district that require constituent services?**

I believe two things are important: Accessibility: One of the most critical aspects of serving constituents is accessibility. Council Members often maintain an open-door policy, allowing constituents to reach out through various channels, including phone, email, social media, and in-person meetings. Regularly holding office hours or community events where constituents can voice their concerns is crucial.

Prompt Response: Constituents expect timely responses to their concerns. Council Members and their staff should aim to acknowledge inquiries and provide initial responses within a reasonable timeframe, even if a full resolution will take longer.

**2. For incumbents: Which bill did you introduce, and most want to see passed? Why is that your top priority? For non-incumbents: If elected, what is the first piece of legislation you would introduce in the new year? Why is that your top priority?**

n/a

**3. 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.**

While do not have any direct experience - I am support open primaries - led by final five nyc

Voting and Elections: Many individuals and organizations work to promote voter registration and participation. This can include voter education campaigns, efforts to expand access to early voting and absentee ballots, and advocacy for fair redistricting to prevent gerrymandering.

Campaign Finance Reform: Advocates for campaign finance reform seek to reduce the influence of money in politics. They may support legislation to limit campaign contributions, increase transparency in campaign financing, or promote public financing of elections.c. In addition I believe

**4. What are your top three campaign promises or goals? Feel free to reference an answer to another question on this form rather than restate it.**

First: Public Safety

Second: Economic Development

Third: Education

## ELECTIONS AND VOTING

**5. How would you describe the relationship between the City Council and the New York City Board of Elections? How will you use (or have you used) your power as a Council Member to improve the operations of the NYC BOE?**

The relationship between the New York City Council and the New York City Board of Elections (NYC BOE) is one of oversight and funding. The City Council plays a crucial role in overseeing the operations of the NYC BOE and allocating funding to support its activities. Here's how this relationship typically works:

**Oversight:** The City Council has the responsibility to oversee the NYC BOE's operations to ensure they are conducted fairly, transparently, and in accordance with the law. Council Members can hold hearings, request reports, and question BOE officials about their activities. This oversight role becomes especially significant during election seasons when concerns about voter access, ballot counting, and other election-related issues may arise.

**Funding:** The City Council has the authority to allocate funding to the NYC BOE to support its operations, staffing, and infrastructure needs. This funding is essential for ensuring that the BOE can effectively carry out its responsibilities, including organizing and administering elections, maintaining voter registration rolls, and providing polling places.

Citizens Union recently [published a report](#) about moving New York City's municipal elections to

even-numbered years, so they would align with presidential or gubernatorial elections, showing this change could boost voter turnout, diversify the electorate, and save money.

**6. What is your position on that proposal to move New York City's municipal elections to even-numbered years and on the overall concept?**

I would support if done by charter referendum

**7. Are you a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting? If so, how will you work to maintain this system and educate voters on how it works? If not, please elaborate on your position.**

Advocacy: As a supporter of RCV, you can actively advocate for its continued use and expansion. This may involve working with like-minded organizations, elected officials, and community leaders to build support for RCV.

Legislation: If you have the authority to introduce legislation or influence policy decisions, you can champion bills that promote RCV adoption or improvements in your jurisdiction.

Community Engagement: Engage with your constituents to explain the benefits of RCV and address any concerns they may have. Hold public forums, town hall meetings, or educational workshops to inform voters about how RCV works.

Collaboration: Collaborate with experts and organizations specializing in election reform and RCV. They can provide valuable insights and resources to help educate the public effectively.

**8. New York City is one of few cities that maintains a closed primary system, in which only registered party members can vote in the election that typically decides who gets elected to office. Do you believe New York City should shift to a form of open primaries, allowing all registered voters to vote in the primary?**

I support open primaries, but it is important to recognize that the transition to open primaries can be a complex and politically sensitive process.

**\* In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve elections and voting or increase competition in New York City's political system. Or, if you ran out of room in the fields above, you may continue your answers below.**

nond

## **CAMPAIGN FINANCE**

**9. If you ran for office before, to what extent have Independent Expenditure entities ("Super-PACs") spent money in your race? Was it done in your favor or opposition of your candidacy?**

nond

**10. Individuals with business ties to city government and registered lobbyists can bypass their donation limits by "bundling" donations from other people, a loophole that can give insiders greater access to officeholders. Do you support banning bundling by people on the Doing Business with the City database?**

I support banning bundling by people on the Doing Business with the City database

**\* In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to strengthen New York City's campaign finance system. Or, if you ran out of room in the fields above, you may continue your answers below.**

n/a

## **OVERSIGHT OF CITY HALL**

**11. For incumbents: Oversight of the administration is one of the most important roles of the City Council. Please describe how you used your position to ensure City agencies and City government are accountable to the people of New York.**

n/a

In the last year, media reports have exposed potential ethical issues within City Hall concerning [conflicts of interest](#) among [top officials](#), the use of [public resources for private matters](#), [appointments](#) of friends and relatives, and [loosening transparency measures](#).

**12. How do you see your role as a Council Member in ensuring high ethical behavior standards and effective ethics oversight and enforcement?**

Supporting Strong Ethics Legislation: Advocate for the development and implementation of robust ethics legislation within your jurisdiction. This may involve working with your colleagues to draft, sponsor, or vote for legislation that sets clear ethical standards for public officials and employees.

Transparency and Accountability: Promote transparency and accountability in government by pushing for open meetings, public records access, and regular reporting on government activities. Encourage your fellow Council Members and government agencies to provide timely and accessible information to the public.

Ethics Training: Support ethics training programs for yourself and your colleagues to ensure that everyone understands and adheres to ethical standards. Encourage government employees and officials to participate in these programs as well.

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**\* In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve ethics in New York City government. Or, if you ran out of room in the fields above, you may continue your answers below.**

n/a

## **POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY AND REFORM**

**13. Who do you think should have the final say on discipline in the New York Police Department? How would you ensure that penalties imposed on police officers are commensurate with the gravity of their wrongdoing?**

displine matrix is already in place- i would leave it alone

**14. What changes should be made to the independent oversight bodies to ensure they can effectively hold police officers who commit wrongdoing accountable (the Civilian Complaint Review Board, Office of the Inspector General for the NYPD, the Commission to Combat Police Corruption)?**

none

**15. Under the 2021 police reform plan, the City committed to expanding programs that effectively shift responsibilities from the NYPD to other agencies in areas like mental health, homelessness outreach, school, and youth, while investing in alternative models for community-driven public safety, such as Cure Violence programs. What do you think about the progress of these efforts? How would you improve policing in the City's various communities?**

- expand community policing and quality life enforcement  
- Also give additional points on exam for residents

**\* In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve police accountability, oversight of the NYPD, and police-community relations. Or, if you ran out of room in the fields above, you may continue your answers below.**

none

## CITY COUNCIL RULES

16. In December 2022, Speaker Adams proposed changes to the Rules of the City Council that would have potentially rolled back positive reforms related to bill drafting services and the power of members and committee chairpersons, among other issues. Although this proposal has been pulled, additional work is needed to make the Council a more democratic, effective, and open legislative body. What reforms would you like to see in the Rules of the City Council?

Speaker should not be allowed to block bills

## PATH TO VICTORY

What is your win number (the number of votes needed to win this race)? 3500

What are your current fundraising numbers? What are your fundraising goals? 138000

How many individual donors do you have? 78

Please indicate any endorsements that your campaign has received, if applicable (you can also share a link to a list of endorsements)

none this time

## ADDITIONAL INFO

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

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

Please review your answers by clicking PREVIEW ANSWERS below.

At the bottom of the preview page, you can

- get a copy of your answers by clicking PRINT, and
- submit the questionnaire by clicking SUBMIT.

**IF YOU DO NOT CLICK SUBMIT, WE WON'T RECEIVE YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE.**

Once you click SUBMIT, you will receive a confirmation email. *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](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org)