



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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

<b>Name</b>	Linda Lee
<b>Running for Council District number</b>	23
<b>Age</b>	44
<b>Education</b>	Masters in Social Work from Columbia University, B.A Barnard College
<b>Occupation</b>	City Council Member representing District 23

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

Linda was the President/CEO of Korean Community Services (KCS) of Metropolitan New York, Inc., New York's first community-based social service organization focused on the Korean community. KCS's mission is to be a bridge for Korean immigrants and the wider Asian community to fully integrate into society and overcome any economic, health and social barriers to becoming independent and thriving members of the community. KCS serves over 1,300 members daily through culturally competent programs in the areas of Aging, Education, Immigration, Workforce Development, Public Health, and Mental Health. KCS has been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic helping members receive unemployment benefits, PPP loans, COVID tests, and vaccinations. Under Linda's leadership, the Obama White House named KCS as a Champion of Change in 2014 for its work around the Affordable Care Act. Linda also spearheaded the creation of the only State-licensed Article 31 Mental Health Clinic serving the Korean-American community operating in New York. Prior to working at KCS, Ms. Lee worked in operations and administration for the New York State Health Foundation and as a social work intern in the North Shore/Long Island Jewish Health System.

**Website** <https://lindaleefornyc.com/>

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

**Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/lindaleefornyc>

## 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?**

As a former social worker and nonprofit executive, I've operated my constituent services with the mantra of "meet them where they are". We've emphasized responsiveness and speed (but not at the expense of quality). Our constituent services directly inform our policy and vice versa. For example, when we noticed that constituents were repeatedly reporting overgrown trees, I shaped my priorities as a member of the Council's Budget Negotiation Team (BNT) accordingly and secured additional funding for tree pruning and tree stump removal.

**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?**

There were bills in three policy areas (mental health, public safety, and food security) that were significant priorities for me. I was very proud to get all of them passed. The mental health bills were part of the City Council's Mental Health Roadmap and involved reporting on involuntary removals and creating an interactive map of mental health service providers. The public safety installation helped expand and codify

catalytic converter etching to address the epidemic of thefts. The food insecurity legislation allowed for better and clearer dissemination of information about food assistance.

**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.**

I was previously a commissioner with the Civic Engagement Commission. In that role - and also in my capacity as head of Korean Community Services - I worked to ensure that the voting process was smooth and helped promote voter rights and registration.

**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: Education

Second: Public Safety

Third: Older Adults

## 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 Council has the power to appoint Commissioners, but it cannot remove them. In that limited role, the Council should weigh each nomination seriously.

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 am not opposed to the idea but I would like to learn more about the issue.

**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.**

Yes, I'm supportive of RCV and efforts to educate voters (especially minority communities) on how to navigate it. In my role as a Commissioner with the CEC (Civic Engagement Commission) and as head of KCS, I worked heavily to promote voter rights and registration and to teach communities - especially those that did not speak English as a first language - to navigate the process.

**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 have not given this issue much thought, but am happy to discuss.

**\* 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.**

## 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?**

Yes our campaign has used independent expenditures in the past - for research and polling.

**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?**

Yes

**\* 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.**

## **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.**

As Chair of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction, I’ve chaired oversight hearings on some of the Mayor’s high-profile (and controversial) proposals to address the mental health crisis. In addition to this oversight role, we also proactively shaped the conversation and constructively challenged the Admin by creating the City Council’s “Mental Health Roadmap”. Lastly, as a member of the Council’s Budget Negotiation Team (BNT), I’ve helped press the Admin on issues of agency spending and priorities.

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?**

I recognize the role of the Council’s “bully pulpit” and oversight role in ensuring appropriate ethical behavior standards. Although I may not sit on some of the pertinent committees (for example, the Committee on Oversight and Investigations), this is a responsibility that I take seriously.

**\* 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.**

## **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?**

Our city needs to make sure that the recommended disciplinary actions are taken seriously. No matter who is the arbitrator, there needs to be guardrails. I am open to discussing this topic with you.

**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)?**

We need to ensure that these independent oversight bodies have the resources that they need to properly investigate. This is the first and most necessary step we need to take.

**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?**

Previous administrations have often used the NYPD as a catch-all solution to address crises that have caught them unprepared. The City does need to build specialized programs and infrastructure in all the aforementioned issues (mental health, homelessness, etc.). Until then, the NYPD will most likely continue to serve as a stopgap solution. However, we have to ensure that they're being adequately trained to handle this "mission creep".

**\* 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.**

## **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?**

I'm never opposed to discussing ideas for reforming or streamlining any process. I aim to strike a balance between quick, procedural flexibility and the need for cautious, methodical due diligence.

## **PATH TO VICTORY**

**What is your win number (the number of votes needed to win this race)?** 10,000

**What are your current fundraising numbers? What are your fundraising goals?** \$341,314

**How many individual donors do you have?** 415

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

<https://lindaleefornyc.com/endorsements>

## **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?**

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

**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)