



Wednesday, September 20, 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

We thank you very much for your response.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Candidate info

Name	Sandy Nurse
Running for Council District number	37
Age	39
Education	I went to public schools on military bases as a child. I graduated from Emmanuel College in Boston with a double major in Communications and Political Science. I also completed graduate degree course work at the New School in International Affairs with a concentration in Conflict & Security studies.

Occupation

City Councilmember for District 37

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Prior to running for office, one of my proudest actions was co-founding the Mayday Space, an award-winning political institution that is a home for grassroots social-justice movements. It has been a place for groups to gather and organize in safety, providing critical community and movement infrastructure in a city that often sets high barriers to entry for simply occupying space.

I also founded BK ROT, which serves hundreds of households and businesses with composting services across 6 neighborhoods, and hires local young people from the district to fill the gap in services from the city.

From 2016-2017 I was on Community Board 4 and participated in the Parks & Rec and Land Use Committees.

I am currently a member of Local Progress and on their NY chapter organizing committee.

Website

sandyforcouncil.com

Twitter

@SandyforCouncil

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)

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?

The top priority I lay out to my team is that no call, no voicemail, no DM, no text, no email, no in-person need goes unanswered. We've built a fully bilingual Spanish and English internal tracking system to ensure that we can log constituent concerns and follow up.

We host regular pop up office events, particularly on the district borders to be accessible to residents, while also explaining what we can do in our role.

The passage of my bill giving residents the ability to track street cleaning online, began with a problem: a complaint from constituents, that the streets were insufficiently cleaned. They doubted if the service was occurring at all. Passing this bill addressed their concern, building trust with the office.

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?

I was thrilled to have the City Council pass the Zero Waste Act this year, a five-bill package that will divert organic waste from landfills, fight climate change, and create a greener, more sustainable future.

We are introducing a package of bills that will work to stop unlawful evictions by increasing the consequences to landlords and ensure they are prohibited from participating in public subsidies for future developments. Keeping people in their homes has been a top priority for me, so I will continue to be a fierce advocate for keeping New Yorkers in their homes in the City Council, and showing up for anti-eviction actions when my community needs me.

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.

Transparency and oversight has been an interesting experience in relation to participating in oversight hearings on public safety. I somehow continue to be shocked when key leaders from the administration do not participate in hearings, are unwilling to answer questions adequately or are simply unprepared.

What I've learned as the Chair of Sanitation is that I want the Commissioner to come with details. So I will ensure that if there are key data heavy questions I need to answer, that I make sure they have those specific questions in a timely manner and then I go directly to OMB to ask it ahead of the hearing.

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: I am especially focused on housing justice, public safety practices that truly make us safer, and what I think of as system-delivery issues, though some might call them quality of life. I am proud of the work I have been able to do with my colleagues towards ensuring access to safe, stable, and affordable housing. In particular, I have been forcefully engaged with the Abolish the Tax Lien Sale Coalition, to help prevent unnecessary and predatory displacement of homeowners. I have also been working with Community Land Trust groups to capitalize on opportunities to provide space for development that is geared only towards the community's needs - not profit. I have a package of three bills around stemming unlawful evictions we hope to introduce next month. Lastly, I am pushing the Community Land Act to remove as much land from the private market as possible and offer first rights of purchasing to our communities.

Second: We need to invest in critical infrastructure to respond to crises that can serve as an alternative response to armed officers being first responders. Investing in EMT pay parity, increasing funding for crisis respite centers, overdose prevention centers, hospital based mobile treatment teams, funding for scholarships for social/human service workers to address staff pipeline issues, etc. Building these programs up is key to providing care and not incarceration. My community is appropriately concerned with their safety, and my work with them has demonstrated time and again that short term incarcerations or even detentions are far more harmful to overall community safety and well being.

Third: As Chair of the Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, I am also proud of the work I've done to improve some of the most visible and tangible ways residents experience this, by working on tracking street sweepers, improving trash pick up, fighting for the Zero Waste Act and the Rat Action Plan, and tackling inputs that contribute to the city's rat problem. My community deserves neighborhoods as well maintained as more affluent districts, and I am committed to continuing to see that work done.

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?

I have a challenging relationship with the BOE: in my initial City Council race in 2020, I was struck from the ballot, by a Brooklyn Democratic Party backed candidate, in the midst of COVID-19's first year in our city, and the rules of the BOE that should help make equitable entry to campaigns were used to deny voters a choice of candidates.

My perception of the BOE is it is run by a bunch of loyalists to the Brooklyn Democratic Party who work to suppress voter choice. The BOE should be professionalized, and workers should take a civil service exam to work there. Beyond this, we need automatic voter registration, a national voting day holiday, fully accessible information in cultural messaging that works in different communities, over-communication on major changes like district line changes, end petitioning, and create open primaries.

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 support this proposal. There is no doubt that having odd-year elections depresses turnout, leads to voter (and volunteer and donor and media) burnout, and wastes our limited resources. It also diminishes the ability of elected officials in New York to focus on their work as electeds, when cycles start and restart unendingly. It would support coordinated party action, which, as we recently saw, is disastrous when it fails

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. RCV is a logistical challenge, but I believe in 2021 it produced a historic City Council, electing people who are able to speak to the widest range of New Yorkers. I think that RCV has been impressively adopted initially, and I would work to do much more education early on to help set expectations - no one elected will take power that night, so let the system work. Let us count every vote, every voter's will, and determine who has the broadest support, not just the richest or loudest.

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 am opposed to closed primaries. Given my background in grassroots organizing, I was not a natural fit for the Democratic Party, as we saw in my 2020 City Council race, when the machine had me struck from the ballot. Open primaries are inherently more democratic, and will make sure that all candidates feel the same need to speak to all constituents, not only the ones qualified to support them in a primary that is, in this city, often dispositive.

*** 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?

In 2021 I believe I was the 2nd or 3rd candidate running for council in super pac spending against me. Tiffany Caban might have been in front of me. This included Dan Loeb's pac, the Common Sense group.

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, I support banning those on the Doing Business list from bundling for candidates. Matching funds are not only great because they help create more equal playing fields between candidates with different donor networks, but especially because they incentivise pursuing lower dollar support from constituents, not

from lobbyists. Allowing a loophole like bundling from people otherwise barred from direct contributions, is a workaround that harms the goals of the matching funds program.

*** 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.**

I have done different advocacy events, such as panels on the benefits of RCV and Public Matching Funds. I recently was at a rally for the state rollout of the program that is currently under threat. I led the charge to organize an RCV Day of Action where I organized candidates to do virtual RCV education workshops during the pandemic. I might have even done an op-ed on RCV during 2021.

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.

I see my role as integral to holding the City's administration accountable for choices it makes, with or without the Council's approval - and when the council moves ahead on business that I object to, I am not afraid to use my voice or my vote. I am committed to prioritizing my community and my constituents over my position, which means I take votes and make stands that can make it easier to attack me. I am committed to being accountable to my community, those who vote for me and those who can't, and demanding better for us from the city.

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?

We are elected to serve the people of New York, not to rule them. It is inherently unethical to use our positions to advantage ourselves personally or advantage our families and loved ones, whether through appointments or preference in any deal or development. I am committed to co-governance, and for that to thrive, transparency is a necessary ingredient. Transparency is one of the most important aspects of an ethical government. In order to be successful, we need to pair it with good educational programs about residents' rights and ways to hold us accountable, and continue to work to reform our systems to be less opaque.

*** 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?

If I felt that the review board's input was reliably being considered in good faith and with appropriate weight, I might say that the final say should come from within the police force structure; unfortunately, it has been made abundantly clear that there is no willingness for self-accountability within the NYPD.

Rejection of qualified immunity is an important part of building an environment where of accountability, including penalties against officers' pensions and retirement. Officers who betray the trust placed in them should not be entitled to have the city continue to shell out for them indefinitely.

I have done advocacy on specific cases over the last decade and am working within NY Local Progress to address the larger lack of accountability across the state.

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)?

It is easy for the NYPD to obstruct investigations, even when oversight bodies attempt to conduct them in good faith. We need the CCRB to be empowered to make the final decision and we need to ensure more impacted folks are on the CCRB. The 75th district has the highest number of CCRB complaints, so the need to reform is urgent in my district.

The best way to hold the NYPD accountable is to reshape their place in the city. We must invest in critical infrastructure to respond to crises as an alternative response to armed officers being first responders. These programs are key to providing care, not incarceration, which will lessen the grip of the NYPD on the systems designed to hold it accountable.

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?

I am committed to the success of these programs, and while I am glad to see them moving forward, we have so much more to do. I will continue to fight to move resources from the bloated NYPD budget to programs and agencies doing work that stems the need for armed responses to begin with. Those funds should go to investing in EMT pay parity, increasing funding for crisis respite centers, overdose prevention centers, hospital based mobile treatment teams, funding for scholarships for social/human service workers to address staff pipeline issues, etc. We have so many of the tools we need to care for our communities, rather than incarcerate them, but they need historic investments to scale up.

*** 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?

A fully transparent LS Request system that provides date, timestamps and a description of requests. A full legal memo on why General Council believes a bill cannot move forward. More power to force a vote through achieving a certain threshold of sponsors, or more members flexing that muscle.

PATH TO VICTORY

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

For our General Election, based on the number of likely Democratic voters and likely Republican voters, we are aiming to earn at least 2,500 votes, in what we expect to be a low turnout year.

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

We have raised \$63,305 and received a partial amount of matching funds, as a result of having a Republican challenger on the ballot. We aim to continue to raise an additional limited amount to add into our digital GOTV program which can expand easily based on our success.

How many individual donors do you have? I have 735 donors so far.

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

I am honored to have been endorsed by local groups 504 Democrats, Brooklyn Progressive Action Network, Brooklyn Young Democrats, CPR Action, Downtown Women for Change, DRUM Beats, Eleanor's Legacy, Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club, Lambda Independent Democrats of Brooklyn, the League of Conservation Voters, Make the Road Action, the Muslim Democratic Club of New York, New Kings Democrats, the New Majority, New York Communities for Change, New York Immigration Coalition Action, Planned Parenthood of Greater New York Votes PAC, Resilience PAC, Run for Something, StreetsPAC, the Sunrise Movement, Tenants PAC, The Jewish Vote, Treeage, VOCAL Action, and Voters for Animal Rights.

I also have the endorsements of labor unions 1199 SEIU, ACEC of New York, CIR SEIU, Council of School Administrators, CWA, DC37, Doctors SEIU, Hotel Trades Council, Iron Workers, LIUNA local 108, NYC CLC, NYCDC, NYSNA, PSC CUNY, RWDSU, and UFT.

I am excited to also have support from Congressman Velazquez, State Senator Salazar, Assemblymember Davila, and Borough President Reynoso, and the endorsement of the Working Families Party.

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