

2023 Primary 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 preference for the June primary.

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 Tuesday, March 14, 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](#) 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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	Justin Brannan
Running for Council District number	47
In which primary	Democratic
Age	43
Education	Fordham University
Occupation	City Council Member since Jan 2018

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Won this office in 2017, 2021.

Website	justinbrannan.com
Twitter	@justinbrannan
Facebook	facebook.com/ReElectJustinBrannan

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?

Our district office is very active in assisting constituents with a host of issues. They are wide ranging from housing, immigration, parks and forestry, speed bumps, transportation, education, senior issues, food assistance, and much more. We also are very active in engaging with residents on social media to resolve their problems.

We also offer services in other popular languages spoken in the district like Arabic, Farsi, Cantonese, and Mandarin.

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?

Int 148-A was introduced, passed, and signed into law. Economic abuse is domestic violence. This type of emotional and psychological terrorism occurs in almost every abusive relationship and is the number one reason victims stay in or return to toxic and often violent relationships. Financial abuse was a blind spot in the New York City Human Rights Law and we had to catch up with other cities. It is impossible to escape an abusive relationship when your tormentor is controlling your money.

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.

During my tenure at the council we revamped the matching funds program, passed non-citizen voting, and have worked to beef up the oversight and investigation committee by giving the committee more teeth in pursuing oversight and accountability over city agencies.

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: Proud to run on my record of accomplishment

Second: Campaign all across the district including parts where I didn't do as well the last time. Fight for every vote.

Third: Highlight differences between myself and my opponent.

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 City Council has limited oversight over the BOE's operations, as the agency is governed by a bipartisan Board of Commissioners appointed by the City Council and Mayor. The Council does approve the BOE's budget, but it does not have the authority to direct the agency's day-to-day operations. I have expressed concerns about long lines, malfunctioning voting machines, and other issues on social media using my platform as an elected official to push for change at the BOE.

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 moving municipal elections to even-number years.

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. My campaign has focused on educating voters on RCV and have adapted our campaign strategy to include talking to voters about the importance of ranking candidates in order to see their voting power go as far as possible in the outcome.

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?

No. I support closed party primaries. A party primary should be settled by party members.

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, there was a Super-PAC that spent money in my race. It was done both in support of myself as well as against my Republican opponent. Of course there was no coordination and they are legally allowed to do it and so it is what it is. Disclosure rules we enacted have helped shed light on IE funders.

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 am unsure. I look at this past election result and see a record number of women, women of color, and Asian candidates getting elected and think the system has worked out pretty well in getting a record diverse body elected. Matching funds ratios, spending limits, doing business limits, etc. seem to be working quite well.

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.

We rejected a budget mod that we felt had too many cuts to headcount in essential city agencies like HRA. I have spoken out about the FY24 prelim budget which I believe to be too austere and will hurt our most vulnerable residents. I will continue to pushback throughout the budget dance with the goal of reaching a budget deal that support and protects our most vulnerable.

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 support increased transparency and like to think that my conduct is at the highest ethical standards.

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?

Overall, a fair and just disciplinary process for police officers requires transparency, accountability, and community input. By ensuring that penalties imposed on police officers are commensurate with the gravity of their wrongdoing, we can build trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve and promote public safety for all.

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)?

Just need to ensure they are not setup to fail and have the budget, headcount, and abilities to do what they are tasked with doing.

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 think it was a big step in the right direction and more work must be done to make law enforcement smarter when engaging with the public. Having other agencies be dispatched to certain situation with healthcare professionals makes a lot of sense.

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 happen to think the council is run pretty well. I am curious to know more about the additional work needed to make the council more open.

PATH TO VICTORY

What is your win number (the number of votes needed to win this race)? 11,000 in the general. There is no primary.

What are your current fundraising numbers? What are your fundraising goals? We have maxed out

How many individual donors do you have? 409

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

Mayor Adams, Speaker Adams, Sen. Schumer, State Sen. Gounardes, Chu, UFT, DC37, 32BJ, NYSNA, CSA, UFA, UFOA, TWU, HTC, and more.

ADDITIONAL INFO

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