

# Boston Policing - City Council Candidate Questionnaire

This questionnaire contains a variety of questions across six sections, covering a range of policing issues. Please submit answers by 11:59pm on August 31, 2021.

This questionnaire was created by the following organizations: Muslim Justice League, Asian American Resource Workshop, Families for Justice as Healing, Youth Justice and Power Union, Kavod, and Boston Cyclists Union. The organizations leading this effort are 501(c)3 non-profit organizations (or fiscally sponsored by one) and do not endorse candidates.

\*\*\*Please limit responses to 100 words for any answers to open response questions.\*\*\* Only the first 100 words will be used in any educational materials produced from this questionnaire. There is an opportunity in each section to elaborate on any yes/no responses.

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## Opening Question

- **OPEN-ENDED:** Millions of people have protested for ending systemic racism and police violence against Black people. How do you understand the relationship of policing and systemic racism? To address systemic racism, how much would you emphasize reforming the police versus reinvesting policing funding elsewhere?

**Safety comes from deeply resourced communities.** Our communities are over-policed, and the policing budget keeps growing while in the midst of a housing and climate crisis. Our schools are severely under-funded, and young people and their families struggle to survive. We can't have safe communities without first investing in meeting our people's basic needs while also working to create ways of preventing, responding to, and healing from harm beyond police and prisons. I will ensure our collective well-being and safety by addressing root causes, focusing authentically and in-depth on healthy youth development, and implementing community-based violence prevention and intervention strategies.

## Budget Priorities

- According to a June 2021 poll by Suffolk University and the Boston Globe, 60% of Boston voters support taking funding from police and using that funding for social services, compared to 31% of voters who were opposed. The Boston Police Department's spending has been over \$399 million since fiscal year 2017-2018. The

police have advocated for additional staffing and funds. This year many groups and residents advocated to cut the BPD budget by \$120 million or 30%.

- Do you support divesting a portion of the Boston Police budget to put towards social services and community wellness? **(YES/NO) Yes**
- If yes, how much of the current \$400 million police budget would you cut? **(Number required)**

**The Boston Police Department spent close to 6 million dollars on overtime in 2020 and over 30 Boston police officers made upwards of 300,000 dollars. I am in support of the proposed 30% cut to the BPD budget to be invested towards social services, funding for community-led responses to violence and harm, the implementation of a civilian flagger program, and an increase in the youth jobs budget for summer jobs, year-round jobs, and the expansion of the program to include young people as young 14 and as old as 22.**

- Local, grassroots organizations led by people impacted by police violence, are calling locally and nationally for funding to support transformative approaches to harm, violence, and crisis in our neighborhoods that rely on community members, their relationships and mutuality, rather than a reliance on the police force.
  - Do you support funding a community-led initiative for transformative justice that focuses on community wellness and safety, completely disconnected from law enforcement? **Yes**
  - How much funding from the city budget would you put towards this community-led initiative? **(Number required)**

**I don't have a specific number but I believe that the city should fully fund these community-led efforts and when necessary collaborate with private philanthropy to make it happen. This includes stipends for community members who are a part of the process and resources for other forms of community engagement. Once community members advocate for a specific number I commit to supporting that and working tirelessly to ensure that we work towards the funding goal set by the people most impacted by this issue.**

- Community groups have called for decreasing the number of police, including through a hiring freeze and moving positions out of the police department to social services and other new community initiatives. The police department is calling for increasing the size of the police force. In FY19, FY20, and FY21, there was one police academy class; the current FY22 budget includes two police academy classes for a total of 250 potential new officers, one beginning in the summer of 2021 and one beginning in early 2022.
  - Would you advocate for a hiring freeze for BPD (i.e. no new classes) from Nov. 2021-Jun 2023? **Yes**
  - **OPEN-ENDED:** What is your position on the number of police officers that there should be compared to the current size of the police force?

**The Boston Police Department's Contract is policy, and their budget is the second-largest expenditure in our City's budget. As we build toward a community-centered process regarding the Boston Police Department's contract negotiations, given the police's unique powers in our communities, I will call for the Boston Police Department's contract negotiations to be made publicly viewable just as**

**City Council hearings are. This will provide a public forum that will facilitate transparency and give us the information we need to make informed decisions while preserving our right to collectively bargain with represented city employees.**

**I share this policy position because I believe that having accurate information on how, when, and why BPD officers are deployed will give us a sense of where we'll have officers, what they do, and what can be transferred into communities instead. In short, I think the number of officers should be directly proportionate to the need in the city AND the vision is that our communities are so well-resourced that we won't need police and policing as they exist right now but we will create something new, effective, that's supported by the city but led by the people.**

- A report from the ACLU of Massachusetts argues that there has been no relationship between spending on overtime and the size of the force for at least 20 years. The Boston Police Department has advocated for increasing hiring to address their consistent overspending on the overtime budget.

- **OPEN-ENDED:** What will you do to address the issue of BPD exceeding its overtime budget?

**I will work to cap overtime spending for the Boston Police Department to 10% of the total operating budget.**

- **OPEN-ENDED:** Between 2017 and 2020, police collectively earned on average just under \$27 million each year working just construction details—roughly the size of the entire Parks Department budget. In addition, the Boston Police Department testified last year that [they fill only roughly half of all requested details](#). While the [average BPD employee working details earned about \\$17,000 last year](#), a budget of between \$25 and \$50 million could create hundreds of full-time, union jobs. If you had complete control of construction details, who would you want working construction details and what department in the city should handle them?

A civilian flagger program would create hundreds of well-paying union jobs for historically over-policed communities hit the hardest by unemployment amid the COVID-19 pandemic. To implement a citywide civilian flagger program, we will repeal Municipal Code 11-6.9e, which will create the legal ability for civilian flaggers to function within the city and collaborate with community organizers who call to redirect these jobs to the community.

- **OPEN-ENDED:** Open response: please share any additional thoughts or explanations for your answers from this section.

## Militarization & Surveillance

- The Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC) was established in 2005 by the

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to reduce crime and prevent terrorism, and includes representatives from DHS and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). BRIC administers the gang database and runs the Real Time Crime Center. BRIC collects and shares information between the Metro Boston Homeland Security Regional (MBHSR) communities, private-sector stakeholders, universities, and state- and Federal-level partners. MBHSR includes Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Quincy, Revere, Somerville, and Winthrop.

- Many community members and organizations have advocated for abolishing the gang database because of its racial disparities and the impact it has on Black and Brown people in Boston. Do you support abolishing the gang database?

**Yes**

- BRIC officers and analysts have advocated for additional staffing and funding to support the Real Time Crime Center, which includes surveillance feeds from at least 750 cameras across Boston. The BRIC is capable of accessing camera footage from the Boston Transportation Department, the MBTA and the Boston Housing Authority. According to Stanford University, Boston has the highest density of surveillance cameras of large American cities. Many Bostonians don't know that these cameras exist and feed to a surveillance center that connects local, state, and federal law enforcement.
  - Do you support eliminating the Real Time Crime Center? **Yes**

**OPEN-ENDED:** What is your stance on BPD's use of surveillance technology, including cameras, license plate readers, and ShotSpotter?

**I think the use of this kind of technology reduces the amount of contact police officers have with civilians who are often over-policed and their use is not without its issues. Increase in surveillance technology moves more financial resources to the Boston Police Department instead of into communities for programming. I believe we need to reduce our spending on surveillance technology.**

- During 2014-2016, BRIC surveilled social media targeting Muslims for using common terms like ummah (community) and Black activists using #BlackLivesMatter. Former City Councilor Tito Jackson had a facebook post on racial inequality included in BRIC's surveillance. BRIC's impact on Black, Muslim and Immigrant Bostonians has led to many community organizations advocating to abolish the BRIC.
  - Do you support abolishing the BRIC? **Yes**
- BRIC is just one of the two fusion centers in Massachusetts, the other one being the Commonwealth Fusion Center. Fusion centers were created by DHS to facilitate information sharing between law enforcement agencies at all levels.
  - What is your stance on BPD's participation in the Commonwealth Fusion Center?

**The BPD should not participate in the Commonwealth Fusion Center and BRIC should be abolished.**

- Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTF) are run by the FBI in 106 cities across the US, including Boston. At least five cities have pulled out of task forces since 2017 due to issues of transparency in leadership and accountability to local protocols on police conduct. These officers are authorized FBI agents and don't have to abide by local law enforcement regulations, making them immune to civilian lawsuits (e.g. the FBI can investigate anyone with no criminal

predicate). JTTFs often impact Muslims through unexpected and intimidating interrogations at their homes. Community groups have advocated for ending the Boston JTTF.

- Do you support ending Boston Police participation in the Joint Terrorism Task Force? **Yes**
  
- Since 2003, the Anti-Defamation League has sent delegations of law enforcement officers from the US to Israel for counter-terrorism training to learn from the Israel National Police and Israel Defense Forces. Organizations in the US, like Jewish Voice for Peace, have called for an end to these exchanges where local and federal law enforcement learn “worst practices.” Durham, North Carolina became the first city to ban its police from training with foreign security forces and in that same year, Northampton canceled its police chief’s plans to attend the ADL sponsored trip.
  - Would you ban the Boston Police Department from participating in foreign security trainings, including these ADL sponsored trips to Israel and similar counterterrorism trainings? **Yes**
- **OPEN-ENDED:** Open response: please share any additional thoughts or explanations for your answers from this section.

## Police contract

- **OPEN-ENDED:** The next mayor will have a major role in negotiating new contracts with all the major police collective bargaining units, whose contracts all expired in 2020. Most of the major initiatives relating to public safety in Boston—including alternative emergency response, civilianizing construction details, and controlling overtime in the BPD—will depend on the results of these negotiations. Although the City Council has no direct role in these negotiations, City Council does have the power ultimately to approve or reject the negotiated contracts. If you are on the Council, what changes and provisions will you look for in these contracts when you decide whether to approve or reject them?

The Boston Police Department’s Contract is policy, and their budget is the second-largest expenditure in our City’s budget. As we build toward a community-centered process regarding the Boston Police Department’s contract negotiations, given the police’s unique powers in our communities, I will call for the Boston Police Department’s contract negotiations to be made publicly viewable just as City Council hearings are. This will provide a public forum that will facilitate transparency and give us the information we need to make informed decisions while preserving our right to collectively bargain with represented city employees.

## Schools & Youth

- Boston Public Schools is currently in the process of changing some aspects of their school policing program (previously named the Boston School Police), while keeping much of the program structure and funding intact. Some of these changes include

shifting to newly designed plainclothes uniforms and renaming the program. School police also lost their police powers (including the power to arrest and to write police reports) because of the [police reform law](#) passed by the state legislature in 2020. An alternative vision for school safety is that holistic approaches such as school counselors and restorative justice programs are under-resourced and that the school police program should be completely eliminated in favor of expanding and creating programs with no basis in law enforcement.

- Do you support eliminating the current school police program and replacing it with safety and wellness initiatives based on a community- and student-led planning process with no basis in law enforcement? **Yes**
- **OPEN-ENDED:** Describe your vision for maintaining, changing, eliminating, or replacing the current school police program, and how community and students would be part of planning safety and wellness initiatives in schools.

I support the elimination of BRIC and the severing of ties between BPS, BPD, and ICE, including the removal of School Resource Officers from all Boston Public Schools.

Our disparate student outcomes are directly related to the investments we make in our schools, if we plan with intention, we can fully fund our schools with substantial, well-rounded resources. In addition to an equity-based allocation of funding, I will advocate for a baseline budget to ensure every school has the resources necessary to implement full inclusion, incorporate ethnic studies, and hire librarians, counselors, and full-time nurses.

- The Boston Police department runs a number of programs and initiatives to engage community members, including an ice cream truck, fishing with young people, National Night Out, and youth jobs based out of the police department. Previously, Boston police participated in a community policing program called Youth and Police Initiative Plus, which targeted Somali youth based on the racist and Islamophobic assumption that they are prone to becoming violent. Due to community advocacy, the BPD ended their participation in this program but continues to control funding for youth programs or engage other youth who are deemed “at-risk” of becoming violent through Shannon grants, Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI), the Youth Violence Strike Force (aka the gang unit) and other initiatives.
  - What is your stance on police officers engaging youth, especially minors, through this type of programming?  
My experience as a youth worker and a streetworker in the city of Boston has shown me that community-centered approaches to violence prevention and intervention are much more effective than programming implemented through the Boston Police Department. The financial resources spent on this kind of programming should be re-granted to community based organizations, organizers, and youth-led efforts across the city.
  - Would you support moving funds from these initiatives to community-led and youth-led violence prevention work where police are not involved or do not

control the funding? **YES**

- **OPEN-ENDED:** Open response: please share any additional thoughts or explanations for your answers from this section.

The Boston Police Department's lack of transparency regarding their community grants process has made it difficult to understand the scope, process, and impact of the millions of dollars they redistribute to community-based organizations. I commit to strengthening transparency by critically reviewing grants, working to move more funding that's decoupled from law enforcement directly into communities, and advocating that the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security shift control of the grants administration away from the Boston Police Department and into other city agencies or community-based organizations, expanding on Councilor Campbell's work.

## Healthcare & Emergency Response

According to a recent [report from Citizens for Juvenile Justice](#), over 75% of incidents that the Boston Police respond to are not "violent." This includes a wide variety of incidents, from animal incidents (dog bites, lost dogs, etc) to verbal disputes between Bostonians. About 6.5% of all incidents are "sick assists" which include mental health incidents. The city of Boston is currently developing alternative ways to respond to mental health crises. The current plan from Health and Human Services is to (1) enhance BPD's current collaboration with Boston Medical Center clinicians, aka the BEST team; (2) to establish a new co-response team with clinicians and EMTs; and (3) to fund a community led process to establish a community-led response.

Do you support establishing non-police response to mental health crises? **Yes**

Do you support establishing non-police response to a larger set of incidents beyond mental health crises? **Yes**

Of the three models that Boston is currently pursuing (listed above), which would you put the most emphasis on? **(1, 2, or 3) THREE**

**OPEN ENDED:** In a [two week period in July three people died in the Suffolk County House of Correction at South Bay](#). One of these three was a woman who died in a holding cell after being involuntarily, civilly committed for substance use disorder, under the Commonwealth's [G.L.c. 123, Section 35](#). The Boston Police Department will, among other methods, use Section 35s when confronting people with substance use disorder. How do you think the city should use its resources to confront the overdose crisis and what initiatives, such as safe injection sites or improved options for treatment, would you pursue to ensure that the city takes an equitable and effective public health approach to the overdose crisis?



Harm reduction programs, policies, and practices positively impact the health and well-being of people who use drugs and the broader community by reducing overdose death and the spread of infectious disease and providing critical linkage to more comprehensive healthcare. I will advance City Council's work to coordinate and expand existing harm reduction and treatment services. I will also work in partnership with municipal leaders, community-based providers, and public health experts to identify pathways and resources to develop these evidence-based, compassionate, and dignified strategies, including Supervised Consumption Sites and voluntary treatment, where most needed and will thus be most effective.

**OPEN-ENDED:** Thousands of people are arrested each year in the City of Boston for minor offenses like driving without a license, drug possession, and disorderly conduct. In turn, police involvement in actions like [traffic stops](#) and the [Field Investigation Observation](#) program have been shown to disproportionately affect Black people. As [reported in the Boston Globe](#), a recent study has found that “not prosecuting low-level crimes was more successful in directing nonviolent offenders away from the criminal justice system.” Rachael Rollins has sought to pursue such a policy for many low-level offenses during her term, but she has now been nominated to be a U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts.

Regardless of who the new District Attorney may be, to what extent would you want the police and the legal system involved in managing these low-level offenses? And what policies would you want your Police Commissioner and the Department of Health and Human Services to enact to approach these issues?

**Officer involvement in the response of low-level offenses should be phased out parallel to the development of community-led alternatives. The police Commissioner and the Department of Health and Human services should put in place policies that reduce the reach of their respective offices and puts more power back into community-centered solutions at all levels.**

**OPEN-ENDED:** Open response: please share any additional thoughts or explanations for your answers from this section.