

Dorchester Reporter

“The News and Values Around the Neighborhood”

2021 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: BACKGROUND

1. What is your name, age, place of birth and present address?

My name is Will Dickerson. I am 42 years old and was born in Boston, MA. I currently reside at 41 Gleason St. Dorchester, MA 02121.

2. What is your present occupation? Also, please note any past employment that may be relevant to your candidacy.

I currently work as an employee for the City of Boston. I am a former Boston City Council aid. I served on Boston City Councilor Michael Flaherty's staff as his director of Constituent Services.

3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.

I attended Grover Cleveland Middle School and North Cambridge Catholic High School. I also attended Becker College.

4. Please list some of your affiliations with non-profits, civic associations and political groups.

My first experience with non-profits was at the age of ten at the Tobin Community Center working with “Dunk the Vote”, where I was under the leadership of Ron Bell. Since my time in Councilor Flaherty's office, I have connected with civic associations and non-profit groups. These connections continued when I worked at the area B-3 Boston Police Department. There I was a Civilian Liaison in the Community Service Office and attended weekly meetings and connected with various non-profits, civic associations, and political groups.

5. What in your experience to date will most help you to be an effective leader?

I am a great communicator and bridge builder, which is strongly needed in this day and time. It is clear to me that we have a major divide on many levels and also a generational gap. I truly believe the skills that I have developed in these areas will lead to success in my goal of bringing us all together.

6. What are the three accomplishments you're most proud of?

I am a proud father. I have also served as a mentor to many youth across the City of Boston. In 2019 I launched the “Adopt a Block Initiative”, which is a faith based initiative.

7. Are you a member of a union?

I am a member of the SEIU.

8. Please list any endorsements to date.

n/a at later time

Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS

1. What is your party affiliation and how would you characterize your political ideology?

I am a Democrat, and I believe that all parties need to work together. It's about the people and not the parties.

2. Please name up to three (and at least one) of your political role models? Please feel free to explain your choices.

My first role model is my Father Bishop William E. Dickerson II. My next group of role models are the many Seniors in our Community that poured into my life over the years. My political role model is the late Thomas M. Menino. Mayor Menino's ability to connect with everyone regardless of their age or socioeconomic status was something that stood out to me at a young age, and he always put the people first.

3. Are you in favor of term limits for the seat you are seeking? If so, how many terms?

Yes, I am in favor of term limits. I feel terms should be limited to five, as we currently have two years per term. I also feel the need to have the City Council be in alignment with the four year election term of the Mayor. This would help voter registration, and election day turnout throughout the city, including the districts that in the past haven't had high voter turnout.

4. What would you do to increase voter turnout in the city of Boston? Do you favor same-day voter registration or lowering the voting age to 16? Do you favor mail-in voting?

To increase voter turnout the City Council should be in alignment with the four-year election term of the Mayor. I believe in both same-day voter registration and lowering the voting age to 16. Yes, I am also in favor of mail-in voting.

5. Do you think that Boston should adopt a rank-choice voting system in upcoming election cycles?

No, I do not believe that Boston should adopt a rank-choice voting system. This will push many voters and non-voters away, especially in District 4.

Section 3: ISSUES & PRIORITIES

1. What is your top priority if elected?

My top priority if elected is ensuring that our communities are safe and healthy throughout District 4 and in the City of Boston. I will also focus on our teens and work to ensure we have productive programs in place that can address the increasing amount of mental health issues that are troubling our young people.

2. How will you approach the issue of gun violence in our communities?

All though we have a city-wide plan to address these issues, I will have a district plan in place after meeting with various violence prevention experts and former offenders of gun violence of various ages. We must address this issue at a very young age, and provide meaningful resources to help solve the problem and fewer meetings. There has to be a clear plan of action, and follow-up is very key. This is a conversation that everyone should be included in, and I will ensure those important connections are in place.

3. Is there a specific city agency you see as in need of urgent reform? If so, please explain.

No, I don't have a specific agency that requires urgent reform, but I feel we need to hold every agency accountable, monitor them, and make sure money is being spent in the best way.

4. What is your position on residency, i.e. requiring people hired by the municipal government to live in the city of Boston?

I believe that if hired by the municipal government in the City of Boston, you should live in the City of Boston. I also believe that city employees get priced out, and that is something we must address. Many young city

employees aren't able to keep up with the high surge of rent within our city, therefore we lose many talented individuals to other cities.

5. The city of Boston presently owns and manages the historic Strand Theater in Upham's Corner. How would you seek to program, market, and utilize this asset?

We need to have a city-wide conversation on how to best utilize the Strand Theater. We should also reach out to our Boston-born heroes in the performing arts, such as New Edition, New Kids on the Block, and many others to see how to best utilize the Strand. The Strand Theater can be our jewel similar to the Apollo Theater in New York.

6. What is your position on vaccinations? Should students be required to be vaccinated for Covid-19 to attend school in Boston?

I believe that students should be vaccinated and/or should have weekly testing for the safety of all, including our teachers. No child should be forced to stay home unless they don't agree to covid testing and mask-wearing. Education is the key in regards to vaccination. We must not force it on people and allow them to make the right choice for themselves.

7. Do you favor a return to an elected School Committee? Please explain.

Yes, I'm proud to say I was the first Candidate for the Boston City Council in District 4 that spoke on the need for an Elected School Committee. We need to have an Elected School Committee Member that represents each district that has an Elected City Councillor.

8. Do you support the recent decision of the BPS and School Committee to alter the admission plan for the city's three exam schools?

I feel it's important for there to be an unbiased admission process in place for the city's three exam schools. This will ensure that the diversity within our city is reflected, while also assessing the level of preparation among our students. The decision of BPS and the School Committee will be reviewed in the future until a perfect plan is in place.

9. Do you support the citywide ballot question that would hand new budgetary powers to the City Council?

I am in favor of the citywide ballot question. I feel the City Council should have access to more budgetary powers, as they are elected by residents of Boston, and have direct knowledge of the needs of those residents.

10. The city of Boston is present without a permanent police commissioner. What should the next mayor do to fill the position and what

type of person should be selected to lead the BPD? W. Do you support the redevelopment of City Hall and City Hall Plaza?

I believe the next Mayor should come together with leaders in the community and law enforcement officials to form a search committee. The person chosen to lead the BPD should be someone who feels it's important to bring the community and Police Department closer together. Community policing, I feel, would put us on the best path for police officers in our city to form a positive bond with people within the community. Yes, I support the redevelopment of City Hall and City Hall Plaza, it is well overdue.

12. What is your assessment of the Climate Ready Boston initiative conceived and executed to date by the Walsh administration? Is this initiative a sufficient response to prepare for the anticipated climate change in the coming years and decades? What else might you do to build climate resilience in the city of Boston?

The Climate Ready Boston initiative is a great asset to the City of Boston. Through the initiative, we need to ensure that we are staying up to date with climate changes and equipping our city for any issues that may occur in the future. It's important that we just don't do the research, but also go out and make the needed improvements that will guarantee a positive outcome.

13. A millionaires tax is expected to be on the statewide ballot in 2022. How do you plan to vote?

I want to read more on this, but I do expect to vote yes on this ballot question. We should also take a look at where we are budget-wise before we increase or introduce new taxation. There may be areas where we can adjust the amount of money spent, and we also need to look at how effective our overall spending has been throughout our city.

14. Should gig workers be considered company employees, rather than independent contractors?

I feel gig workers should be considered company employees. We must be able to adapt to our ever-changing economy and the demands of workers. Being recognized as employees allows these workers to participate in labor unions and collective bargaining.

15. A report commissioned by the Walsh administration found that just 1.2 percent of city contracts awarded between 2014-2018 were awarded to Black or Latino-owned businesses. What would you do to change that?

Boston is a very diverse city with a vast number of Black and Latino-owned businesses, so it was disappointing to see these numbers. The bidding process must be fair. The level of difficulty that some small

companies are facing during the bidding process, gives larger companies an advantage. Working with the Office of Economic Development may provide the best way to increase the available support to Black and Latino - owned businesses as well as small businesses.

16. In 2018, the Walsh administration set a goal of creating 69,000 new units of housing in Boston by 2030. What is your assessment of this target — and what would your office do to balance growth with the concerns that many have about displacement in neighborhoods like Dorchester?

It's wonderful that there will be 69,000 new units of housing. The main issue in our city is not only the lack of units available but the affordability of those units. I will make sure that we are looking out for our Seniors, who are living in areas that are being developed and experiencing an increase in the property taxes that they pay. I feel it's important to make sure our City secures funding for the construction of affordable and mixed-income units and also has a plan in place to assist those who may be facing displacement.

17. What is your assessment of the Walsh administration's overall performance? Please offer a letter grade or pass/fail as part of your answer.

I would give Mayor Walsh's administration the letter grade of "B". Mayor Walsh worked tirelessly through this last unprecedented year dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic that hit our City. Mayor Walsh's unwavering leadership helped ensure the City of Boston is thriving today.

18. What is your assessment of the acting Mayor Kim Janey's performance since taking office in March 2021? Please offer a letter grade or pass/fail as part of your answer.

I would give acting Mayor Kim Janey's performance since taking office a letter grade of "B" due to the circumstances that have allowed the City of Boston to keep moving forward during a global pandemic. It's not easy to leave the ranks as City Councilor and take over as Mayor.

19. Will you seek to expand or change the composition of the Zoning Board of Appeals? If so, how?

I am in favor of the expansion of the Zoning Board of Appeals. It is important to have residents represented and have members of the environmental and urban planning agencies also on the board. This is reflected in HD 2338, a petition which is currently pending in the statehouse, and that I support.

20. When not on the campaign trail, how do you unwind? Spending time with family and friends

I have found that spending time with my family and close friends is the best way to unwind when I am not on the campaign trail.

21. If you were not a candidate, who would you support in this election for either Mayor or City Council?

I honestly respect all of the candidates running for Mayor and the City Council. I can't answer this question and I wish everyone the best during this important time to help move our city forward.

Thank you for participating in the Dorchester Reporter questionnaire. Please send the completed document as a PDF or WordDoc to newseditor@dotnews.com by Fri. Aug. 8, 2021.