

Dorchester Reporter

"The News and Values Around the Neighborhood"

2023 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: BACKGROUND

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

Name: Jose Ruiz

Age: 63

Place of Birth: Caguas Puerto Rico

Address: 114 Readville Street, Hyde Park, MA 02136

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

Currently, I am retired, but I worked as a Boston Police Officer for almost 30 years.

3. Please detail your personal educational background and achievements.

Growing up, I attended Boston Public Schools. After graduating high school, I went to Northeastern University for several years before leaving, as I needed to get a job to help support my family. Eventually, I completed my education in 2003, receiving a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice from Curry College.

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

- Co-founder of South End Baseball
- Co-founder of Latino Law Enforcement Group of Boston (LLEGO)
- Former Director of Boston Red Sox Foundation's Reviving Baseball in the Inner Cities Program
- Former Regional Director for the Boston Neighborhood Basketball League
- Weekend Programs Director at the Boys & Girls Blue Hill Club
- Youth Little League Coach

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

My years of working in and around the communities I am running to represent have prepared me the most. This has not only given me the chance to meet and form friendships with so many residents from every

part of District 5 but also to develop a unique understanding of the issues faced by many in these communities. These connections and knowledge will help me immensely on the City Council, ensuring I am ready to hit the ground on day one and begin working to deliver for our community.

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

One of the things I am most proud of is my mentorship work. When I joined the Boston Police Department, I was determined that in addition to ensuring our communities were safe, I would dedicate myself to mentoring younger people of color who were also interested in a career in law enforcement. Throughout my career, I have worked with hundreds of young people and organized programs that prepare them for the rigors of any law enforcement academy.

Another accomplishment was when I partnered with BIMBO Bakeries to organize food donations for residents in need in Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park. Since 2010, the program has donated \$120,000 worth of food to these individuals and their families.

Finally, in 2009, following a horrific homicide on Blue Hill Ave, I partnered with several local non-profits and labor unions to build a Youth and Family Center within the Franklin Field Development. This center offers needed services, assistance, and a safe haven to individuals and families in and around the community.

7. Are you a member of a union?

Not currently, but I was a member of the BPPA for 30 years.

8. Please list any endorsements to date.

IBEW Local 2222
IAFF Local 718
Boston Carmens Union

Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS

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

I am a lifelong Democratic.

My political ideology is helping people, no matter who they are or where they come from. In the last two years, we have seen divisions bring the work of the Boston City Council to a grinding halt, with factions forming and one-sided pitted against the other. I believe that is because many on

the body are too bent on getting their own way all the time and unwilling to work together or compromise, which is needed to get things done.

If elected, I will work to bring the council together and ensure we are focused less on “which side we are on” and more on delivering for the residents who elected us to serve.

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

Former Mayor Marty Walsh is a political role model for me. Having spent several years working for him at City Hall, I could see up close his commitment to helping every resident he could and his dedication to making our city a better place. Those are the same values I share and hope to bring with me to the Boston City Council.

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

I am not in favor of term limits. Decisions regarding who is elected to office in the first place and how long they remain should be left up to the voters' discretion.

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? Would you support combining municipal and state/federal elections into even numbered years to increase turnout in municipal elections?

We must work to increase voter turnout and civic participation across our City. I fully support mail-in voting and would support same-day registration as well. In addition, I would be open to having all elections occur the same year if we believed that would increase turnout overall.

I support keeping the voting age at 18.

Section 3: ISSUES & PRIORITIES

1. What is your top priority if elected?

I am running for Boston City Council because I don't believe our district is currently getting the representation it deserves.

Our community needs real leadership on the City Council. Someone committed to delivering for every resident and focused on leading our city into a successful future, and if elected, that is precisely what I will do.

I want to find solutions, not create more problems. I want to bring people together, not further divide them. Most importantly, I want to help make our community an even greater place to live.

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

Having served as a police officer for almost 30 years, I take nothing more seriously than working to keep our communities safe. I have seen firsthand the devastating impact of gun violence on our neighborhoods and the horrific loss of life it causes, especially in our black and brown communities.

It's crucial to recognize that addressing gun violence requires a multi-faceted approach. We must empower and work with our police officers to get guns off the streets, targeting and prosecuting those selling and supplying these weapons. At the same time, we must invest in community-based initiatives to tackle the root causes of violence. If elected, I would push for more significant funding for mental health resources, social services, and educational programs that foster conflict resolution skills and provide alternatives to violence.

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

Other than the needed reforms to the BPDA, which are covered in the following question, I would like to work to streamline administrative processes within city departments to ensure efficient service delivery. By leveraging technology advancements, we can make it easier for residents to access information, apply for permits/licenses, and resolve any concerns.

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

This is an idea I would be willing to consider.

While I would like all city employees to remain Boston residents, I fully understand for some, that is simply not possible due to the high cost of housing, lack of quality schools, and more.

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

I do not support an elected school committee.

As someone who grew up in this city and attended BPS when we had an elected committee in the past, I remember full well the problems that existed. We need to look no further than the current dysfunction of the

Boston City Council to see what could happen if we go back to the elected model.

We need to focus on stabilizing our school system now, not adding more confusion to it.

6. Boston doesn't have enough housing to meet the demand. Separately, the Wu administration wants to see a return of the city's population to 800,000. 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 and Mattapan?

In Boston, the demand for housing has outpaced supply, resulting in skyrocketing rents and limited affordable options for many residents. This issue requires a comprehensive approach to ensure equitable access to housing for all. While it is essential to look to the future and prepare for the likely population increase we will see, we first and foremost need to be focused on supporting the residents who already live here. This is especially true in underserved communities like Dorchester and Mattapan.

If elected, I would work to make homeownership within reach for hardworking individuals and families by increasing investments in the city's first-time homebuyer programs and exploring other ways to offer down payment assistance to provide financial support and help bridge the gap between renting and owning.

I would also partner with developers, non-profit organizations, and local businesses to create more affordable housing options throughout our city and explore opportunities to renovate vacant or underutilized buildings into affordable housing units, breathing new life into our neighborhoods while addressing the housing crisis.

Finally, in addition to the lack of affordable housing for new renters and homeowners, countless individuals and families struggle to keep up with the ever-rising cost of homes they already own. We must explore ways to lower property taxes and provide financial support for struggling residents to help keep families and aging residents in the homes and neighborhoods they love.

7. What is your position on rent control?

We need to do something to deal with the high cost of rent in our city, which makes it difficult for many individuals and families to remain and even leading to displacement. However, I don't think rent control is the answer. I worry this policy would lead to decreased investment in our communities, less housing being built, and, as a result, would eventually lead to increased rents overall.

8. What is your position on the reforms the Wu administration is undertaking, aimed at the zoning code and the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA)?

While there still seem to be elements of the Mayor's plan that have not been made public yet, I believe the BPDA requires reform and support attempts to do so.

9. What do you think are the lessons learned from the Covid pandemic, and what would you advocate to change in city health policy as a result of the lessons learned?

The Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly been a wake-up call for all of us. It has exposed weaknesses in our healthcare systems and highlighted the importance of proactive measures to protect public health. As a City, there is a lot we can do to ensure that should this ever happen again.

We must improve our city's healthcare infrastructure by investing in state-of-the-art medical facilities and expanding access to quality care across all neighborhoods. At the same time, we should focus on bolstering public health programs that emphasize early detection, disease prevention, and education campaigns to raise awareness about infectious diseases. Finally, we must address healthcare disparities and ensure equitable access to healthcare services, regardless of income, race, or background. This includes improving access to testing, vaccines, and healthcare facilities in underserved communities.

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

I would give the Mayor and her administration a passing grade, but I believe we still have much work to do. In particular, dealing with the housing crisis, investing more to keep our communities safe, making actual and lasting progress, improving our education system, and more.

11. The Red Line and several commuter rail lines run through Dorchester and Mattapan. How will you advocate for better service and conditions on public transit?

Our public transportation system is failing our residents. While the City Council does not have much oversight of the MBTA, and these issues will mainly be dealt with on a state level, I do think there are things we, as local officials, can do to ensure we are working towards creating a better system for those who live in our communities.

This means working with state partners to develop a comprehensive plan that prioritizes long-term goals rather than the current practice of only responding to immediate breakdowns in the system. In addition, we need to ensure we are investing where it is needed most, in our lower-income

communities that have a much greater dependence on public transportation as the means to get around.

12. What would you do to make Dorchester Avenue and Blue Hill Avenue better roadways?

We must proactively invest in our city's infrastructure, and if elected, I would push to secure funding for necessary improvements and upgrades along Dorchester Avenue and Blue Hill Avenue. This includes repairing potholes, improving signage, and enhancing pedestrian safety measures.

At the same time, we should address congestion issues on these roadways by collaborating with traffic experts to identify effective traffic management solutions. This may involve implementing smart traffic signals, optimizing lane configurations, and exploring alternative transportation options such as public transit improvements.

13. What are your plans to reorient our neighborhoods to center around pedestrians and bikers?

It is vital that we make our communities more pedestrian-friendly, especially when it comes to safety. We should work to add more crosswalks, improve street lighting, and implement traffic-calming measures in high-risk areas.

In addition, I support expanding bike lanes in our city but believe we need to ensure we are putting them in the right place, and working with community leaders and small business owners to provide the lanes will not cause issues with parking or more significant traffic congestion.

14. When not on the campaign trail, how do you unwind?

For the most part, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends. I also enjoy working out and participating in competitive activities like billiards and table tennis. I am a member of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) and very much appreciate the outdoors. I also love to read and try to grab a new book every chance I get.

Thank you for participating in the Dorchester Reporter questionnaire. Please send the completed document as a PDF or WordDoc to newseditor@dotnews.com by Friday, Aug. 18, 2023.