



2021 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Anyone planning to run for Somerville City Council this year is invited to apply for Our Revolution Somerville's endorsement by completing this questionnaire, which constitutes the first step in ORS's endorsement process (to be followed by a candidate forum and a vote of our membership). Your responses below will be sent to our members and also published online. Please respond to every question. Questions marked with a "(Y/N)" should be answered with just a "Yes" or a "No," but you may add additional thoughts in the comments field at the end of each section. With the exception of Question #5 (which has no word limit), your question answers and your comments in each section must not exceed 300 words each. Answers or comments exceeding 300 words will be truncated prior to publication, and answers to "(Y/N)" questions other than "Yes" or "No" will be removed prior to publication.

Introductory/General Questions

1. What is your name, how is it pronounced, and what pronouns do you use?

Stephenson Aman...he/him

2. Email address:

CitizensforStephAman@gmail.com

3. What is your campaign website?

stephensonaman.org

4. What office are you seeking?

Ward 2 city councilor

5. Tell us about yourself and why you are running for this office.

I was born in Boston, but my parents were immigrants from Haiti. I grew up in a single parent household. Being a big brother to my younger siblings built me for the future. After moving around a lot, I ended up in the foster care system and bounced around the juvenile justice system a little more. I was able to get my life back on track thanks to high school, then I almost lost my life in a horrible accident. It took months of rehab to get me back- but I would never be the same. This is right when I moved to Somerville some 15 years ago. I pushed myself to go back to school and get more involved in my community.

After years and years of service to Somerville, from youth sports to city hall, I'm running for Ward 2 city councilor because I'm well over- due. I'm here stepping up and running for office because I want to continue the work I'm doing but putting it on a grander scale. I'm currently working for the city as an outreach liaison to the hard to reach communities and also work at Marshall's to be able to stay in Somerville.

6. Will you refuse/return campaign contributions from (Y/N):
- a. Real Estate Developers and their Lawyers? **Yes**
 - b. Police Unions/Fraternal Associations? **Yes**
 - c. Health Insurance/Healthcare Executives, Board Members, and Lobbyists? **Yes**
 - d. Fossil Fuel Executives, Board Members, and Lobbyists? **Yes**
 - e. Charter School Executives, Board Members, and Lobbyists? **Yes**
 - f. Corporate PACs? **Yes**
 - g. Executives and board members of companies that have been cited for wage theft violations or that have had repeated claims of wage theft filed against them (See <https://www.mass.gov/doc/ags-fair-labor-division-complaints/>)? **Yes**
 - h. Executives and board members of companies and organizations that have employed union busting tactics? **Yes**

Comments:

As a first time candidate with no financial cushion who works two jobs to make ends meet, and no network of wealthy family or friends, I am at a big disadvantage. My opponent owns property in Union Square worth millions. He has given his campaign \$3,000 of his own money in the past. He can easily self fund this race. It is a luxury others may have, but I do not. The people I work with and have helped through the years are not in a position to help me financially either. So I will use judgement about the money I take. Donors will not sway how I vote or how I see issues in this community. My values are not for sale.

7. Do you share Our Revolution's values, as expressed in the organization's national priorities (<https://ourrevolution.com/issues/>)?

Yes

8. What does democratic socialism mean to you?

Equality

9. ORS values diversity and believes that including diverse and underrepresented voices at the table is important in both politics and policy-making. How has your campaign demonstrated that it views this as a priority, and how will you continue to make it a priority if elected?

Working with diverse communities is what I do now for the city and what I have always done as a community leader. We are still in the beginning stages of our campaign but we'll include everyone. It is important to have everyone at the table so no one is left out or behind.

10. Since August 20, 1619, the day the first enslaved Africans arrived in Jamestown, and through the 402 subsequent years of slavery, Jim Crow, redlining, mass incarceration, and violent policing of black communities, racism has been a consistent thread woven into the fabric of America. How have race and culture affected your life and how do/would they inform your work and relationships with your constituents?

Race defines my life. Because of my race I was judged, hunted and hated on. But my culture protected me and motivated me to do better. But everything that I've been through won't affect my work or relationships with constituents.

Voting Record Checklist

11. Did you vote in favor of — or if you had been in office would you have voted in favor of -- the following items that were voted on by the City Council in its last two terms (Y/N):

- a. Transfer Fee **Yes in favor**
- b. Condo Conversion Ordinance **Yes in favor**
- c. Short Term Rental Ordinance **Yes in favor**
- d. Wage Theft Ordinance **Yes in favor**
- e. Tenant Right to Purchase Home Rule Petition **Yes in favor**
- f. Affordable Housing Overlay District **Yes in favor**
- g. Cuts to FY21 SPD personnel budget totalling \$1.18 million. (That vote did not pass. The City Council ultimately cut only \$650k) **Yes in favor**
- h. The mayor's request of an appropriation and bond for the [remediation and renovation of Conway Park](#) to a depth of only 18". **In favor**
- i. Oak Street Block Party permit for BLM mural. **Yes In favor**
- j. Home Rule Petition Extending Municipal Voting Rights to 16- and 17-year olds **Yes in favor**

Comments:

Labor

12. Would you vote to fund city staff charged with fielding, tracking, and following up on wage theft complaints and a wage theft “know your rights” campaign that ensures all workers in Somerville know their rights and where to turn if they suspect a violation?

Yes

13. Would you refuse to support any transfer of land from the city to a developer in the absence of a Project Labor Agreement that ensures labor standards and local hire?

Yes

14. ORS believes that all city employees, contractors, and subcontractors should receive the full benefit of Massachusetts laws that protect workers, including living wage, earned sick time, and paid family and medical leave statutes. Unfortunately, some of these protections, such as earned sick time, do not automatically apply to municipal workers unless the city takes specific action to adopt them. Will you take actions within your power to ensure that all city workers receive the benefit of all worker protections currently in place for private employees in Massachusetts?

Yes

15. Do you oppose privatization of public municipal services in Somerville?

Yes

16. Would you support an ordinance that would require a minimum percentage of Somerville residents to be hired on large construction projects, and with major employers, in Somerville?

Yes

17. What steps would you take to incentivize and support worker-owned cooperatives in Somerville?

No response

18. Somerville's Job Creation and Retention Trust is now nearly two years old. How would you evaluate the impact of the trust so far and what would you do as an elected official to improve its mission and impact?

No response

Comments:

Because of Covid it's really hard to do that, so let's give it a little more time and see where it is. But it's a great concept and let's hope businesses can stick to it.

Housing Justice

19. Name at least 3 protections that you would include in a Tenant Bill of Rights.

Relocation if eviction is needed. substance/mental health access. job /school access.

20. What concrete steps should the city make to ensure all tenants and landlords know their rights and responsibilities?

Tenant rights assemblies, Landlord education requirements, rent to own programs.

21. If elected, would you vote for the following (Y/N):

a. A bill to provide right to counsel in Housing Court regardless of income level or documentation status. **Yes**

b. Directing city revenue to the Somerville Community Land Trust? (feel free to suggest possible sources for such funds in the Comments field for this section) **Yes**

22. What steps could Somerville take over the next five years to increase housing affordability, particularly to meet the needs of households with less than 50% AMI?

Build more housing.

23. How will you support mobility and sensory accessibility as an inherent part of real estate development in Somerville?

This is personal to me since I am unable to walk up stairs without great effort. I would make sure the developers have accessible units dedicated to the people that qualify.

24. How will you improve and expand upon mobility and sensory accessible affordable housing stock in Somerville?

Talk to the people

25. Do you support an eviction moratorium for the remainder of the COVID-19 Crisis and for one year thereafter (as outlined in the Housing Stability Act)?

Yes

26. Do you support increasing public housing, including in your ward?

Yes

27. How do you intend to address homelessness in Somerville?

Finding all the homeless and figure out why they are homeless and provide them with what's needed to get them off the streets.

28. Would you support legislation requiring that all brokerage fees in residential rental units are the responsibility of the landlord or property owner?

Yes

Comments:

New York City outlawed all broker fees on rentals as of the fall of last year. We should consider the same.

PILOT (Payment In Lieu Of Taxes)

29. What steps will you take to make sure that Somerville gets the most out of future PILOT negotiations?

Gather a team of experts and residents to discuss actions, build a plan and execute that plan.

30. Do you support the creation of a resident PILOT negotiating committee, and their ability to make binding recommendations regarding PILOTs?

Yes

31. How would you support state legislation that would increase municipalities' ability to receive fair and equitable PILOTs?

Yes

Comments:

Reaching out to my reps and getting them on board. Making sure the community knows the benefits of the program. Then reaching out to these organizations to sit and meet.

Electoral Reform and Democracy

32. Do you support legislation that would create public financing for municipal elections?

Yes

33. Do you support expanding voting rights in municipal elections to include Somerville residents who are:

a. Non-citizens? **Yes**

b. Presently incarcerated (outside Somerville) for a felony conviction? **Yes**

34. What will you do to ensure volunteer committees have city staff to support their success?

No response

35. What changes would you like to see through Somerville Charter reform?

No response

36. How can charter reform be used as a tool for addressing racism and improving equity in our city?

No response

37 Will you reject any charter reform that includes a city manager?

No response

38. What changes to the staffing, resources, or compensation of City Council will you fight for, and why?

No response

39. What specific changes would you prioritize to make meetings and community engagement more accessible?

No response

40. The City of Somerville has a wide variety of boards and commissions, with available seats, intended to be filled by residents. According to the Somervillema.gov website boards and commissions page, "Somerville residents have awesome ideas, a wealth of knowledge, and interesting perspectives that are invaluable to the City." Please share your thoughts on the current structure of Somerville City Boards and commissions, giving consideration to posting/advertising, appointment practices, and terms of service (time commitment). Is the current structure working to assemble sustainable, functioning, democratic, and diverse boards? If yes, how so? If not, share your thoughts on improving structures currently in place.

No response

Comments:

Public Accommodations/Transit

41. Do you support funding gender neutral public restrooms in city buildings?

Yes

42. Do you support making public transportation free to Somerville residents?

Yes

43. What actions/ordinances would you propose to make streets safer for pedestrians and bicyclists in Somerville?

SASS

44. What are the largest parking-related challenges facing Somerville, and how do you propose we address them?

No response

Comments:

Too many cars and not enough space, access to parking stickers, tow truck driver targeting. We have to consider community parking garages, easier access to parking tickets, make a city law that tow trucks should issue a \$20 fee to call driver before towing.

Policing and Public Safety

45. What is your vision for public safety & policing in our community, including schools?

No response

46. Do you support (Y/N):

a. redirecting SPD funding to prioritize community policing? **Yes**

- b. redirecting SPD funding to prioritize de-escalation training? **Yes**
- c. redirecting SPD funding to prioritize mental health and substance abuse programs? **Yes**
- d. opening safe injection sites in the city of Somerville, including in your ward? **No response**
- e. the decriminalization of drugs? **Yes**
- f. legislation banning Somerville from involvement with the 1033 program, which transfer military arms and equipment to civilian police departments? **Yes**
- g. cutting the police budget by at least 10% in each year of the next term? **No**
- h. legislation banning the use and storage of teargas by Somerville police? **Yes**
- i. allowing non-police to take over traffic-work? **Yes**
- j. capping overtime earnings of police and correctional officers at 10% of their salary? **Yes**
- k. a [CAHOOTS](#)-style program to enable unarmed response to mental-health-emergencies? **No response**
- l. the welfare of sex workers, including but not limited to full decriminalization? **No response**
- m. legislation banning law enforcement and schools from cooperating with and sharing information with ICE? **No response**
- n. the abolition of private prisons, cash bail, and the prison-industrial complex? **No response**
- o. divesting your city's pension funds from defense contractors, fossil fuel companies, and prison-related industries? **No response**
- p. banning any exchanges of the Somerville Police Department with foreign militaries or police? **No response**
- q. the police abolitionist movement? **No response**

Comments:

BDS

47. Do you support the BDS (Boycott Divestment Sanctions) movement?

No response

48. Do you support ending Somerville's contracts with corporations that are complicit in the Israeli occupation of Palestine?

No response

Comments:

Climate Justice

49. What do you consider to be the most urgent environmental justice issues in Somerville? What actions will you take as an elected official to address these issues?

No response

50. By what year will the city of Somerville be carbon neutral? How will you ensure that the city is carbon neutral within this timeframe? Specifically, describe how you will approach retrofitting affordable and rental housing to zero greenhouse emissions standards within this timeframe.

No response

51. SOMERVISION2040 set a goal of 100 new acres of open space. What would you do to achieve this? How would you ensure access is equitable and that nature and greenspace are available to all?

No response

52. How do you propose to equitably increase the amount of renewable energy in the city's Community Choice Energy program?

No response

53. What topic areas or recommended policies within the Somerville Climate Forward plan will you prioritize? Explain what strategies you will use and specific actions you will take. What do you feel is missing from the SCF plan?

No response

54. Do you support a ban on new natural gas infrastructure in the city? How would you address the impact on local labor?

No response

55. Describe what you see as the values and goals of a Green New Deal. How will you implement these values and goals in concrete public policy?

No response

56. Do you support bringing the energy grid under public and democratic control through municipal and state buyouts?

Yes

57. How do you plan to vote, or how would you vote, on [Somerville's Native Planting Ordinance?](#)

No response

Comments:

Climate Justice is most important to me. Not only did I live in the Mystic Apartments that sit on 93, which have a terrible air quality problem, but kids there get sick so much more than others. I fully support a Green New Deal and believe it will be very helpful to Somerville.