

**Progressive Waltham Candidate Questionnaire  
2017 City Council Election**

## **Housing**

Housing costs are out of control. Home prices and rent are sky rocketing, making it more and more difficult for residents to keep and find housing. To prevent homelessness and promote affordability, we need to increase the supply of state and city affordable housing and adequately fund housing assistance programs.

As state representative, I have worked closely with members of the Joint Committee on Housing advocating on behalf of housing and homelessness programs in the Commonwealth. I support efforts to create safe affordable housing and expand services for our most vulnerable residents including low-income seniors, veterans, families and individuals with disabilities. I also support efforts to prevent and end homelessness through support of programs that provide individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness with shelter, housing search and stabilization services.

In the past, I was proud to receive the Housing Advocate Award from WATCH CDC, the only organization in Waltham focused on increasing affordable housing development. I am also an original, honorary member of the Board of Trustees for the Community Day Center of Waltham, the only day shelter of its kind in the Metrowest that offers case management services and warm meals for its clients. For years as a city councilor I strongly advocated for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) for the Day Center.

- As City Councillor, I will introduce an ordinance increasing requirement of affordable unit for larger developments from 10% to 20%;
- I will support extending the CPA voucher program and explore using the Housing Trust Fund;
- I will encourage the use of CPA funds to rehabilitate multi-family housing into permanently affordable units;
- I will continue to support a community-based planning process for the future use of the Fernald property which includes local residents and organizations such as the Fernald Working Group.
- I will continue to advocate financial support for the Waltham Community Day Center, Inc. and a permanent, dry Waltham Homeless shelter.

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## **Diversity:**

Waltham is rich with history, arts and culture, and support for the arts should be a fundamental priority for the community. Promoting arts, culture and diversity simultaneously promotes a variety of other important issues such as economic prosperity and job creation, educational achievement, health and wellness, and civic engagement. Perhaps most importantly for a community as diverse as Waltham, support for the arts helps to cement and promote a cultural legacy by embracing our community's unique character and passing it on to future generations. We are a community that has long celebrated these riches and we need to do a better job of celebrating the uniqueness of our people who made it all possible. The arts and cultural offerings of a city tell an important story about its history and how it embraces its people of all ages, genders and cultural backgrounds. Waltham should be actively promoting and celebrating our cultural and artistic diversity and it should be our calling card to the world.

In the future, I see Waltham as a world-class city that works in partnership with its artisans, musicians, historic preservationists, schools, cultural groups, colleges and residents to build an Arts, Culture and Diversity Program that is unmatched. All of the necessary characteristics to become a world class cultural center are already here, but it requires leadership, vision and heightened collaboration to bring those assets together and build something exceptional.

Waltham has a long list of existing cultural assets that are already contributing to the fabric of our community. Our robust local music scene includes two orchestras – the Waltham Philharmonic Orchestra and Waltham Symphony Orchestra, the Reagle Music Theater of Greater Boston, a free summer concert series hosted by the Waltham Arts Council, Waltham High School's show choir Music Unlimited and show band, and many other live music offerings. We have amazing performance art by the Hovey Players, Bentley and Brandeis Theater Companies, and are proud to be the only school district in the state offering drama education to all students K-12. We offer unique physical assets such as the Waltham Public Library, Waltham Historic Society, a variety of historic estates and homes, and the Waltham Mills' Artists Association. Having such outstanding artistic talent and physical assets right in Waltham's backyard delivers amazing benefit to our residents and these assets should be maximized to their fullest potential.

Our community is exceptionally diverse and getting more diverse over time. In the decade between 2000 and 2010, Waltham saw a 5.1% increase in Latino population, a 2.3% increase in Asian/Pacific Islander population and a 1.5% increase in African American population. These demographic changes are unusual for Massachusetts and make Waltham incredibly unique. As a community, we need to translate that uniqueness into opportunity, and as we engage in policy making, supporting and celebrating our diversity should be a large part of the decision making process.

I will support a program of arts, culture and diversity that makes Waltham the envy of Greater Boston. **Our agenda should be formulated around three important principles of resident engagement, planning for the future, and effective management.** We will learn from the experiences of other world class cities and look for ways to integrate creativity, cultural awareness and artistic exploration into our city fabric. When visitors come to Waltham, they should immediately understand who we are and what we are about by seeing, hearing and experiencing the history, art and cultural diversity of our amazing city. Supporting the arts also offers economic benefit to the city and our small businesses. The Academy of the Arts estimates that an average arts attendee spends \$24.60 above the price of admission when attending an arts event, and that non-local visitors spend twice as much as local visitors to cultural and arts events. This spending represents an important economic boost for our city while simultaneously promoting a stronger community development platform for our residents.

Waltham should seek a **Cultural District Designation** for downtown that supports enhanced cultural activities and tourism. We will become a destination for events, dining, unique cultural and historic experiences, and the arts. We will promote arts and culture in our public spaces and buildings by adopting great models like the Sidewalk Poetry Program recently launched in Cambridge, and we will remove red tape to enable more performance art in public spaces as was recently undertaken in Boston. We will maintain, preserve and invest in our public spaces so residents and visitors feel safe, comfortable and welcome to participate in civic events and visit public spaces. We will promote enhanced arts and music programming in our public schools to ensure that our students obtain a comprehensive educational experience with enrichment programs that offer opportunities to express their creativity and talent in a variety of ways. We will ensure that our public library has the resources it needs to continue their valuable programming that serves residents of all ages. We will explore the opportunity to open an arts center, as was once contemplated for the former South Middle School, to provide a place for music, arts and cultural programming for Waltham residents.

The city workforce should be more representative of the population it serves. I will encourage the establishment of a **Cultural Diversity Committee** that will work to enhance outreach efforts to multicultural groups and promote more engagement with city government at every level. The Committee will advise my administration on ways to improve our diversity planning, programming and engagement, and diversity policies will be integrated into every department of city government. I support expanded adult ELL classes, citizenship classes, and integrate workforce development programming for young adult immigrants into the public schools to mitigate drop-out potential and provide alternative pathways to opportunity for their future. Waltham should collaborate with local artists, cultural groups, public schools and community groups to produce street-based art and performance, and display local art throughout our public buildings. We should establish public-private partnerships and seek foundation support of innovative arts programming, such as micro-grants to artisan entrepreneurs, pop up art exhibits, and storefront artist programs.

Waltham needs the right team in place to drive progress and execute our community vision. I will propose the appointment of a **Diversity Director** within city hall to serve as a liaison to the minority and immigrant community and to ensure that all residents have an open line of communication to the City government. The Diversity Director will also be responsible for engaging with city departments, Personnel Director, residents and with the Cultural Diversity Committee to ensure that consistent and comprehensive diversity policies are implemented throughout every city department. I also support the appointment of an Arts and Culture Director, who will be a strong and focused advocate for the arts in Waltham. The Arts and Culture Director will be a partner for the Waltham Arts Council and will serve as a grant writer for the city to attract new financial resources to supplement non-profit and government-sponsored activities. It is anticipated that the economic benefit of promoting enhanced diversity and art and cultural activities, coupled with the opportunity to attract grants, foundation support and public-private partnerships will generate more than enough revenue to support these two important personnel positions.

**The voices of all of Waltham's residents should be heard and celebrated.** Cultural exchanges between Waltham and other cities around the world, and should be modeled such as the Hands Around the World Program in Dallas, TX to make meaningful connections between our residents of diverse ethnicities. Collaboration with artisans, multicultural groups and our colleges are essential to create synergies between our arts and cultural events by leveraging existing events such as the Waltham Food and Wine Festival, the Leonard Bernstein Festival of the Creative Arts, the Watch City Steampunk Festival and the Waltham Riverfest to provide additional tourism and cultural benefits for Waltham.

When Waltham embraces its arts, culture and diversity in a systemic way, we will feel a new sense of community in our city. It means people of color and diverse ethnic backgrounds being a part of the decision-making process in Waltham, and as such, our city's decisions will be more comprehensive and thoughtful about meeting the needs of all residents of Waltham. It means our streets, buildings and public spaces will be welcoming and adorned with all local art and expression. It means better enrichment in our schools and more creativity for our students. It means people of all ages and backgrounds coming together toward the common purpose of making our city beautiful and joyful. It means music and performance on our streets, tourists filling our shops and supporting our local businesses, and a revived spirit of excitement throughout our city. Residents will have the opportunities to contribute to the fabric of our community in their own unique way, and Waltham will be better for it.

**Immigration:**

People who perpetuate crime and acts of terror have many different origins and appearances. These acts are not committed primarily by people of the Muslim faith, nor those from the immigrant community. Waltham is an ethnically and racially diverse city; residents come from all over the world to join our proud community. In past years, our city embraced newcomers from places like Italy, Ireland, England, Scotland and Canada. In recent years, we have welcomed Latin Americans, South Asians and Haitians, among others. And we are a better city for their presence and contributions. The actions of the Trump Administration sets a damaging tone and misrepresents what our country stands for: religious freedom and embracing people from far and wide. They send the wrong message to those who wish to come here, and communities at home that now fear for the safety of themselves and their loved ones.

We all want to be safe from people who instill fear, hatred, and violence. But the President's Executive Orders effecting refugees and immigration make America less safe. Policies banning Muslims and directing law enforcement to ramp up the deportation of families will likely have the effect of motivating those who wish to harm us.



(Waltham Common Religious Freedom/Anti-Travel Ban Rally)



(Copley Square – Boston, MA Religious Freedom/Anti-Travel Ban Rally)

With regards to terror, our nation's resources and energy should be focused on routing out terrorists at home and abroad and not blanket discrimination based on color, origin or religion. I support legislation (Safe Communities Act) - and resolutions designating Waltham as a Sanctuary City - which prohibits state support for a Muslim registry and the use of state and local resources for mass deportations or deportation raids but allows continued local and state police collaboration with federal immigration agents to apprehend dangerous criminals. This year I was proud to stand with my fellow Americans to rally against these discriminating policies at Copley Square and the Waltham Commons. I also spoke in support of our local immigrants at a public meeting at Waltham High School (2/9/17: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dml-myhqKYQ&feature=youtu.be>).

### **3) environmental-related issues**

Promoting sustainability is a win-win for the City of Waltham. We can save money for taxpayers while also making the city a nicer, cleaner, more affordable place to live for future generations. Everything we do in local government should be considered through the lens of sustainability, from the operation and maintenance of public buildings and public spaces, to land use planning and zoning, to procurement of vehicles and equipment, to transportation planning and traffic management, and the list goes on. I support sustainable policies that cut across all departments, programs and operations.

Waltham is a home to some of the world's most sustainable companies, yet the city does not participate in a robust public-private partnership to support local sustainability efforts. The wealth of corporate knowledge, experience and resources in our own backyard could be leveraged with greater leadership in our city.

Over 50% of the state's communities have joined the Green Communities Program because it provides valuable resources to help municipalities with sustainability planning and programs such as energy efficiently, renewable energy, and clean transportation. This state program has made over \$80

million in grant awards to the now 185 cities and towns that have earned the Green Communities designation to reduce energy consumption in schools and public buildings, erect solar arrays, and implement the latest building codes. Waltham has not been eligible for any of those grants. Similarly, the state's Energy Resilience Program made \$40 million in grant awards to help cities and towns to use clean energy technology solutions to help prevent service interruptions due to the effects of climate change. Waltham did not receive a grant from that program either; another missed opportunity.



(Source: Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs, Green Communities Program website)

Climate change is an international issue that cannot be addressed by any one city. In Metro-Boston, 14 area mayors have teamed up and created a task force to address this issue on a regional basis. The task force, announced earlier this year, will work together to address the region's readiness for the inevitability of climate change, and will make policy recommendations and set regional priorities for climate preparedness. Waltham is not represented around that table; this must change.

Currently, Waltham recycles less than 20% of its waste, which is low by regional standards. Combined with the fact that Waltham pays among the highest rates per ton for trash incineration, our low recycling rate winds up costing taxpayers millions of extra dollars in disposal costs.

Sitting in traffic in congested areas of Waltham wastes time, fuel, and money, while needlessly harming the environment. This is another area where a thoughtful sustainability approach can make a difference. The City can improve signalizations at intersections, make the city much more bike and pedestrian friendly, and press state officials for improved public transportation access. In the FY17 budget, I helped secure \$156,000 for the installation a wireless coordination system for 39 identified traffic signals in the business district of Waltham.

Cities all over the world are recognizing that sustainability is a key issue for the future that requires commitment and forward thinking at the local level. In July 2015, mayors from all over the world met and adopted the United Nations sustainability development to "end extreme poverty and hunger by 2030, ensure health care, education, access to water, sustainable energy and growth for all — and take urgent action to combat climate change and protect the Earth." Waltham should adopt these same goals, and below are some examples of how I will support and promote sustainability in our great city:

- 1) Waltham must adopt the Green Communities Program to make Waltham eligible for important state grants and resources to supplement the local sustainability efforts. The city's Energy Action Committee should be reconfigured and empowered to leverage the talent and expertise of

our citizens by establishing real goals and objectives for the Committee to support long range sustainability and resiliency planning with an actionable implementation plan.

- 2) Waltham should hold an annual Sustainability Summit to engage residents and promote a more sustainable Waltham. The event should outline efforts, report on results, and encourage residents and local businesses to bring new ideas to the city. Waltham should also establish public-private partnerships with cutting edge local companies to introduce energy efficiency and sustainability initiatives. Residents and businesses will recognize that sustainability is a priority for the city and will feel welcome and encouraged to participate in the discussion.
- 3) I will encourage City Hall to join the Metro-Boston area mayor's task force on climate change, and work in partnership with other municipal leaders who have implemented smart sustainability plans, such as Somerville, Boston, Cambridge and the Merrimack Valley. This collaboration will provide a higher level of regional collaboration and high impact sustainability planning at no expense to the taxpayer.
- 4) I will work with local and state officials to identify and remediate brownfields sites in Waltham, and we will prioritize that effort based on redevelopment potential and the severity of contamination. The first priority will be to access state or federal brownfields funding to enable the city to repurpose the former town landfill, which was evaluated more than a decade ago and remains unused today. Utilizing the lessons learned by many other municipalities in Massachusetts who have done this successfully, Waltham will work to make city-owned land available to residents for public purposes, including open space and recreation facilities.
- 5) Waltham should always seek to maximize efficiencies in local government. One immediate way to do so is to assess the energy efficiency of all public buildings and implement new technologies to reduce local energy consumption and thereby reduce the cost and carbon footprint of our public facilities.

As City Councilor, I will provide vision and leadership for the sustainability of Waltham generations to come. Working with stakeholders both inside and outside of Waltham, we will reduce the energy costs of operating public buildings, implement better protections for our environment, promote greater utilization of renewable energy technologies, and support the creation of more affordable housing options for our most vulnerable residents. Waltham will be an active partner in promoting global sustainability, by joining state and world leaders on efforts to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, and provide enhanced access to renewable technologies and public spaces. With my support, Waltham will join the ranks of other leading cities across the state, country and world by working to make our city a nicer, cleaner, more affordable place to live for future generations.

## **4) Education**



Raising the cap on charter schools dominated much of the public education discussion for the past several years, culminating in Question #2 on the 2016 statewide ballot. Results aside, what we should take away from the heated debate over Question #2, is that an overwhelming majority of Massachusetts voters consider public education to be an extremely important issue. Most, if not all, public school parents want their children to receive the highest quality education possible and want their respective school districts to be given the proper tools and resources to provide this. At the start of the 2017-2018 legislative session, I offered several proposals to help **close the achievement gap** and allow public schools to focus more of their attention on education:

- 1) **In November 2015, the Foundation Budget Review Commission released a report highlighting the need** to update the method the state calculates the per pupil cost of delivering education. The Commission discovered that the foundation budget significantly underestimates the cost of educating students **by at least \$1 billion per year**. Included in the Commission's recommendations were increasing the rates paid to districts for special education students and for **English Language Learners (ELL)** as well as providing a new tiered support for districts with high concentration of poverty, and aligning health insurance costs and inflation rates to Group Insurance Commission (GIC) numbers. Over 20 years has passed since the foundation budget was reviewed. We cannot wait another 20 years before reviewing it again. Making the Foundation Budget Review Commission a **permanent entity** will ensure that Ch.70 will keep up with the times and reflects the true cost of educating Commonwealth students. Current state budget constraints will most likely prevent full adoption of the Commission's recommendations, but a phase-in of the changes along with targeting school districts in dire need is feasible and should be explored further.
- 2) **Waltham Public Schools** are at or above capacity after experiencing an unforeseen surge in ELL enrollment over the past several years, a 60% increase since 2011-12. Many of these ELL students are classified as students with interrupted education (SIFE) and students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). These students are often refugees from war-torn regions with little to no formal education and require staff-intensive interventions to close the serious gaps in learning in such a short amount of time. The increase in ELL students has put a strain on WPS's already-limited resources. Waltham is certainly not the only school district in the Commonwealth facing this situation. School districts need to be given the proper resources in order to deliver a first-rate education to ELL, SIFE and SLIFE students. The



Commission's findings on ELL rates hold merit and should be a point of focus for education reform over the next two years.

- 3) Another area ripe for reform relates to **state mandates** on public school districts. This issue is repeatedly brought up by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) as a priority year-in and year-out. A top-down review of all state mandates is warranted and should be included in a larger education reform package. DESE or an education mandate task force should develop recommendations on how best to streamline, consolidate, or eliminate outdated or duplicative mandates as well as instituting a moratorium on all new mandates until a task force reviews existing ones. While some state mandates are necessary for compliance of federal laws or for public safety, many are onerous and are often unfunded by the state, requiring local school districts to come up with the funds for implementation. Our school districts should be focusing on what's most important, educating students; not complying with burdensome mandates.

Massachusetts is blessed to annually rank as one of the top states in the country for public education. We have a legislature, administration and electorate that are passionate about education and want to see our students achieve success in K-12 and beyond. These proposals give school districts the necessary resources and tools that reflect the true cost of education in the 21st century to address abrupt changes in student demographics, and allow school districts to concentrate on education, not administration.

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS:**

In 2002, Massachusetts voters passed a ballot proposal (Question #2), by a margin of 61-29 percent, replacing the state law providing for transitional bilingual education in public schools with a new statute mandating that all public school children to be taught all subjects in English. ELL students were now required to be placed solely in English language classrooms. At the time, supporters of the ballot proposal believed it would help ELL students by teaching them English as quickly as possible. As a result, schools began implementing so-called "Sheltered English Immersion" (SEI) classes, taught primarily in English. Detractors of the 2002 ballot law deemed this as a one-size-fits-all approach that did not take into account the wide range of immigrant students' educational backgrounds, among other factors.

However well-intentioned Question #2 was back in 2002, changing demographics and the persistent achievement gap between English speakers and English Language Learners (ELL) have since proven that SEI classes are not benefitting **ALL** ELL students. The Joint Committee on Education has recognized this issue and recommended legislation, **H.3705 (now H.3740) - An Act for language opportunity for our kids**, that would allow school districts to submit their own plans for educating ELL students to state education officials for approval. This effectively gives districts more flexibility when it comes to teaching students who are not proficient in English, whether they are the children of highly educated foreign graduate students or come from war-torn countries with little to no formal education; classified as either students with interrupted education (SIFE) and/or students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). The House overwhelming passed H.3740 and I expect a similar result when the Senate takes up the measure in the coming weeks.

I filed legislation, **H.3557 - An Act establishing an English language learner state grant program**, takes the next step in this discussion, encouraging and rewarding school districts to come up with innovative programs to increase the achievement of ELL students, including those classified as SIFE and SLIFE. The bill would simply create a state grant program for public schools, who meet some level of growth in their ELL population from one year to the next. Indicators of success include:

- At or above attendance targets for schools

- Decrease in the number of behavioral referrals
- Increase in course completion rates
- Positive impact on graduation rates for this sub group and the entire school population (long-term indicator of success)

The idea for this legislative came from a couple of the approaches Waltham Public Schools (WPS) is taking to educate and increase the achievement level of ELL students. Waltham Public Schools have experienced a massive increase in ELL enrollment since 2010 and presently support approximately 1,000 ELL students district-wide, many of who are SIFE and SLIFE students with little to formal education and are not fully literate in their native language. These students often require staff-intensive interventions to close the serious gaps in their learning in as short a time as possible so that they can continue through the education system with their peer age-group.

For SIFE and SLIFE students, Waltham High School created a one-year program for newly arrived SIFE and SLIFE immigrant and refugee students, **The Newcomer Academy**. This program provides a rigorous instructional curriculum that promotes the rapid acquisition of the English language, develops native language skills, and orients youth to the American culture, while also offering students and families a caring and supportive environment. The Newcomer Academy ensures that SIFE and SLIFE students develop the foundation skills necessary for successful transition into SEI classrooms.

While the Newcomers Academy is effective with older non-English students, WPS is well-aware that this may not be an ideal way to educate kindergarten-age children. Thus, WPS instituted a new **Dual language immersion program** for Hispanic ELL kindergarten students in which they were taught academic content in two languages, Spanish and English, with the goal for each student to become proficient in both languages. Forty kindergarten students, separated into two classrooms, were chosen by a lottery from the more than one-hundred who applied. This program represented a bold step-forward to increase the achievement level of ELL students in Waltham Public Schools. The Commonwealth should be encouraging more districts to adopt similar, innovative approaches so that successful programs can be more easily adopted and duplicated by eligible districts.

Out of all the issues the WPS Superintendent and School Committee could bring to my attention, both continually request for any additional state aid to cover the costs associated with the massive increase in ELL enrollment the district is experiencing across all school levels. This is certainly not something Waltham is alone in facing. Many school districts across the Commonwealth are trying to figure out how to provide these students with the highest quality education possible with the limited resources they have. The grant program established under H.3557 represents a great first-step towards rewarding innovative approaches taken by school districts to raise the achievement level of ELL students.

### **Waltham Public Schools:**

There is nothing more important than educating our children in an environment that promotes self-esteem, positive social interactions and enthusiasm for life-long learning. Waltham has the good fortune of having dedicated teachers and supportive families, but the city's leadership on education is insufficient and our teachers have not been provided with the necessary tools to succeed. The **turnover rate** for teachers and administrators is too high, creating instability within the system. The long-anticipated overcrowding at our elementary schools also ballooned into a critical problem. Despite repeated warnings for over a decade about the need for upgraded school facilities, the plan for a new high school facility is far from implementation.

Waltham needs a sustained and active commitment to educational excellence. We should demand a school system where the students are excelling, facilities are modern and up-to-date, the diversity of our student body is both addressed and celebrated, special needs students get the support they need to achieve their highest potential, innovative teaching and programming is our competitive advantage, and music, arts and enrichment programming is abundant. Our world is innovating and our public school system needs to keep up in order to prepare our students for the workforce of the future. Educational excellence is the foundation of every great community and it is an achievable goal for Waltham as well.

The WPS was responsible for educating 5,461 students across ten schools during the 2016-17 school year. The high school dropout rate has been significantly higher than the state average in years past. Additionally, our high school dropout rate among English Language Learners (ELL) students was more than three times the state average in prior school years. Our ELL population is more than double the state average at **17.3 percent**, with more than **60 languages** spoken in the Waltham Public Schools. The turnover within the school administration is astoundingly high, with **six new superintendents and dozens of new principals over the past 12 years**. Some of our elementary schools are bursting at the seams due to overcrowding and our high school facility is outdated and inadequate for 21st century learning. Teacher salaries are below the state average and our per-pupil spending decreased over the last two school years, yet the overall school budget continues to rise year after year and our facilities are getting worse rather than better. Something needs to change and it needs to change now.

As the parent of a current Waltham Public Schools student, I know there is a lot going right in our schools, but I also know that we can do better. We need to ensure that every student has the opportunity to start life on the right foot. We need to know that our educators are excited and empowered to teach our kids in the best ways possible. We need to do more to leverage the opportunities at our doorstep, by working with our cutting edge companies and institutions of higher learning to improve opportunities to our students, teachers and administrators. Waltham students deserve nothing but the best!

The school committee plays an important part in setting the agenda and direction for our public school system. The school committee should be empowered to act as an independent body as intended by the city charter. City government should prioritize educational excellence for all students and support the school committee to do its job, and not micromanage its decisions.

The school superintendent, school committee, parent associations and teachers union should work together to address the consistent problem of administrator and teacher turnover throughout our school system. Waltham loses valuable experience and relationships every time we lose a member of our administration or faculty. **Educator retention** needs to be a priority for Waltham, and one of my primary goals as a local official will be to support the policies or conditions that will lead to higher rates of teacher and administrator retention.

Waltham has an outstanding opportunity to partner with our local institutions of higher learning and corporate leaders to achieve a unique educational experience for our students. We have missed opportunities for Waltham to partner with area colleges to maximize the mutual benefit that can be realized when college students and their professors connect with city departments, schools and area non-profits.

Waltham Public Schools needs a long-range financial plan that is transparent, understandable and consistent. I support long-range financial planning across all departments, but specifically in our public school system to better understand the current and future financial needs for our schools. We need to fully understand the funding requirements of operating the schools for peak performance. We also

need to recognize the capital investments that will be necessary to keep our facilities in good condition and our equipment modern and relevant for 21st century learning techniques. I support working with the school committee, teachers union, city council and parent organizations to craft a plan that addresses our school funding needs with fiscal discipline for taxpayers.

To support educational excellence, I will collaborate with the school committee, superintendent, administrators, teachers, and legislators, as I have as a city councilor and state representative, on efforts to build a new high school. Additionally, I will work to ensure that the overcrowding and other facilities issues are addressed in the near term and consistently addressed in the future throughout the regular course of business.

Similarly, there are opportunities to partner with innovative companies in Waltham to promote cutting edge STEM education and technology preparedness that is required of every job in the 21st century. Such partnerships will create high school internship opportunities for our students with these companies located in our very own backyard. To facilitate these partnerships, a private-public educational task force comprised of businesses, higher education centers, Waltham Public Schools representatives and parents should be established to seek ways to formulate more of these collaborative opportunities to improve the educational experience in Waltham.

Waltham is a unique City full of cultural diversity and I believe that our diversity should be celebrated and considered an opportunity rather than a challenge. One distinct opportunity for Waltham Public Schools is the proposed **dual language immersion program** that offers our students the opportunity to learn foreign language skills beginning at a young age, making it easier for those students to learn even more languages later in life. The dual language immersion program will be a competitive advantage for our schools. It will also serve as a community development tool to bring students and families of diverse cultural ethnicities together toward common objectives. I believe that the dual language immersion program is a win-win for Waltham and it represents the spirit of innovation that we should promote in Waltham Public Schools.

While our community's cultural diversity provides opportunities for Waltham, it also brings challenges for our educators who need to address the unique needs of all students. As City Councilor, I will work with all relevant stakeholders to focus on the unique needs of ELL students and their families to ensure that they are able to access all of the services and supports that Waltham and its school system offer. I will support the district to reduce performance gaps and to improve the performance and opportunities for ELL students and the school system at large by collaborating with officials in other parts of the state who are facing the same challenges and developing best practices. Waltham should be at the forefront of developing best practices, potentially serving as a role model for other cities and towns looking to address similar challenges.

I want families in Waltham to choose the public schools over private school options because of our district's superior performance and unique offerings. I want teachers and administrators to stay in the district for the bulk of their career, getting to know families and making a long-term commitment to our city. I want other districts to look to Waltham for best practices to close achievement gaps, reduce dropout rates, increase MCAS and SAT scores, and create a seamless college placement and school-to-work program. This is my vision for educational excellence in Waltham and I know it is achievable with hard work, public engagement and innovative thinking.

## 5) City Planning

To me, Waltham is more than just a place to live. It's my home and my neighbors are my family. I have spent my entire life here; watching generations of my family give back through community service. This life experience has had a profound impact on me and my commitment to public service and community. I was born in Waltham and I will live here until I die, and there won't be a day that passes that I won't be thinking of ways to make my community even better than it already is.

I see things that are broken in our local government and I want to improve them. We hear so much about the potential for Waltham, but we need to feel the tangible outcomes of that potential through new jobs, great schools, better support of our seniors, confidence of our businesses, enthusiasm of our public servants, welcoming of newcomers, and a stronger sense of local pride from every corner of every neighborhood. I believe that Waltham has all of the attributes of **a world class city at our fingertips**, but we need a local government with the vision and passion to tackle challenges head on and propel us forward toward solutions.

Waltham has been **reactive instead of proactive**. Issues have gone unaddressed for too many years and have now snowballed into more critical, more expensive problems for the city. There are tangible examples in every area of municipal government where deferred maintenance and irresponsible decision making has led to larger bills for taxpayers:

- Rather than repairing broken bricks in downtown sidewalks years ago, we let them deteriorate to the point where they required replacement at a higher cost;
- Rather than cleaning and repairing the Beaver Street Bridge culvert, we waited for an emergency closure of the bridge and replacement the culvert altogether at a major inconvenience to residents;
- Rather than addressing the high school facility concerns when they first arose ten years ago, the city is still searching for a solution and new location;
- Rather than repairing and updating the police and fire stations over time, we have waited until they are dilapidated, falling apart and unhealthy, resulting in the police union suing the city over working conditions;
- Rather than equipping our police officers and firefighters with modern technology, equipment and clothing that is commonly available in other towns, we have ignored the need putting our public safety personnel in unnecessary jeopardy;
- Rather than addressing our traffic problems we waited 14 years to develop a still unfunded master traffic plan;
- Rather than empowering a professional planning office we ignore the problem and let development happen to us;
- Rather than proactively embracing and protecting our diversity we allow new immigrants to live with anxiety and uncertainty;
- Rather than securing a permanent location for a well supervised homeless shelter we pay the Day Center to house homeless in overcrowded conditions or wait until 4 in the afternoon to decide if a city building will be utilized;
- Rather than hiring a professional firm to facilitate comprehensive planning for the Fernald property we fumble along with no direction

**\*\*Ignoring problems does not fix them. Ignoring problems only leads to bigger problems down the road.**

Waltham must strive to be the world class city it is meant to be. As city councillor I will be proactive and responsive to the needs and wants of our citizens, and I will push our city in a way that enables Waltham to take control of our destiny and plot our own course for the future, rather than letting the future lead us. Together we will all feel the tangible outcomes of that effort through great schools, a continuous capital improvement plan, inclusionary Fernald planning process, permanent homeless

facility, welcoming and support of our immigrants, heightened public engagement, and a stronger sense of local pride from every corner of every neighborhood. Success is at our fingertips, but we need a government with the vision, energy and passion to tackle the challenges head on and propel us forward toward solutions.

It's time to be honest about where we are today and where we are headed as a community. I am excited to tackle that conversation head on, share my thoughts and ideas, and listen to your thoughts and ideas as well. This is the time for Waltham to pull together and demand more and better for ourselves, our city and for our kids.

### **Leadership and Vision:**

My plan for Waltham is centered on strong leadership, clear vision, and professional and modern management of our city. I believe that leaders provide vision and guidance, hire talented and professional managers, and then empower their management team to execute. As city councillor, I will demand the best and brightest talent to fill key roles in our city, and I will ensure that the city is staffed at a responsible level to provide consistent and world class leadership on all issues. I will support a positive and professional work environment at City Hall where we can attract and retain exceptional talent to public employment and our city employees feel supported, energized and empowered to introduce new ideas. We will work as a team to implement best practices and seek new and better ways to continually provide the best customer experience to our residents. I will encourage the empowerment of the **Personnel Director** to ensure that we keep our team motivated and engaged to reduce unnecessary turnover. We will hire the best and brightest candidate for every available job, and diversify public hiring practices to ensure that our city employees are more reflective of the diverse community that we are serving. We will keep job satisfaction high by creating a professional environment where our employees are treated with respect, have opportunities for professional development and growth, and where the best interests of the public come first. I will continue to support the inclusion of citizens in the decision process as I have with the Fernald, I & I and zoning issues. **The quality of public services in any government comes from the inclusion of its citizens in policy formulation and satisfaction of public employees** and I will do all that can be done as a councillor to ensure that both are exceptional in our city.

I believe that leaders should seek constant improvement, learn from the experience of others, and explore new and different ways of doing things. As a local elected official, I will be frank about what is and is not working, and be flexible to change for the better. I do not fear innovative thinking. In fact, I embrace innovation – the very premise upon which Waltham's rich history was built. I will work to implement best practices in every area of government, measure progress and efficiency, and report results in a transparent way to make it easy for residents to understand how we are doing as a community and suggest new ideas for how to make our community even better.

**Leadership is also about working well with others.** I will continue to value relationship building in the same way that I have throughout my career in public service. First and foremost, I will work to build a strong, respectful relationship with colleagues that is based in partnership and collaboration. By working together, I am confident that we will accomplish far more than has been achievable in recent years under a more adversarial and competitive climate.

### **Community Engagement and Transparency:**

Waltham is full of hard working and talented residents who care so much about our great city and have so much to offer. It is a failure of City Hall to not engage the residents of Waltham in a serious way for new ideas on how to improve our city and better serve the community. I will **make community engagement a priority**, and I will treat public input as a *responsibility* of our local government. I

will work with the City Council, neighborhood groups, senior organizations, PTOs, public employee unions, immigrant and minority groups, and every other organization in Waltham to ensure that each and every stakeholder group is heard, valued and that their perspective is considered during the governing process. I will respect the time, commitment and input of citizen advisory committees, and I will not convene these committees without a purpose, agenda or real influence, which serves only to waste valuable time.

I believe that citizens become more engaged when they have a better understanding of what is happening in their city and when they have a point of contact for questions. I believe it's the responsibility of City Hall to make information readily available to all residents and in a way that is easily understood. A city that is known as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution should do a better job of embracing technology in local government, and I will do just that to make sure our residents feel better-informed and invited to engage in whatever ways they feel comfortable, including through the internet, social media, smart phone apps, and in more traditional ways such as community meetings, by telephone or in writing. I will work to improve the transparency of city government by making more information available online in a clear and concise way, and by providing more ways for citizens to offer feedback and suggestions. **Waltham will be a stronger community when more people feel informed and engaged.**

I also believe that City Hall should be working as a convener and central portal for things happening in and around Waltham that may not be driven directly by the city. By doing so, we will gain a much larger perspective on what is happening among and between residents and different groups, and the city can serve to support those activities through enhanced networking, use of public facilities or by simply promoting them on the city's website on an events calendar or in other ways. City Hall can and should be seen as a partner to Waltham residents.

### **Focus on the Future:**

Governing isn't only about today, but it's also about tomorrow. It's about working on parallel tracks to meet our needs today, while also anticipating and planning for the needs for our kids and grandkids in the future. In Waltham today, we are suffering from stagnation. City Hall reacts to current day challenges without any forward thinking or long range planning, and we suffer as a community for not looking ahead. The Planning Department is not equipped for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, yet development has continued for over a decade without any direction or understanding of how each individual project impacts the city at large and the infrastructure that is serving us. Residents can feel the impact of that neglect each and every day in the traffic gridlock throughout the city. There are substantive penalties for communities that are not sufficiently prepared for the future.

I will do all that I can to encourage the city to value planning ahead, forecasting issues, and doing what is necessary to address them before they become critical needs. I will encourage long range plans with milestones and deliverables being achieved along the way, work with residents to assess how we want Waltham to look and perform in five, ten and twenty years from now, and I will start putting the building blocks in place to achieve those goals. I will support reestablishing a Planning Department for the city run by a well-qualified and experienced planner who will work with residents, businesses and other stakeholders to set land use policy for our city. Great communities are built by realizing a dream and going after it. The kind of leadership City Hall needs is with an eye to the future and going after the dream of becoming recognized as a world class city.

### **Infrastructure, Transportation & Fiscal Affairs:**

Maintaining reliable infrastructure is a fundamental role for city government and one that requires time and attention. The maintenance and security of public infrastructure should be a top priority. Waltham

should not ignore routine maintenance and not rely on the state or other governmental entities to interject when infrastructure deteriorates to the point of being unsafe. I will ensure that important roles like City Engineer and road maintenance crews are filled with qualified individuals who can get the job done. I will argue for more effective and efficient management of public resources and infrastructure than has been experienced in Waltham in recent years, and better planning and management strategies to avoid costly inconveniences resulting from bridge closures, failing sewers, overwhelming traffic congestion, and other avoidable scenarios.

Going hand in hand with infrastructure is the need for improved public transportation systems in Waltham. We have the great benefit of two commuter rail stations, but with very limited interconnectedness between residential neighborhoods and other communities in the region. We need a public transit system that delivers individuals to their final destination, and not simply between Boston and a local train station. Waltham will be a better city when people can move around freely thanks to a robust public transportation system that alleviates traffic congestion and reduces pollution by taking cars off the city streets. I will work with local officials and the state delegation to gain maximum leverage of outside resources to improve public transportation offerings. Communities with leaders who collaborate are most successful in securing state grants and other financial resources.

And I will insist that our fiscal affairs are in order. Waltham residents have the benefit of lower taxes and minimal fees but we cannot expect to thrive as a community without targeted investments in infrastructure, schools, and capital maintenance. Thanks to a robust commercial tax base, Waltham has plenty of resources that can be deployed in better ways to achieve more results for taxpayers. With a transparent budgeting policy that is clear about the outcomes of each investment, Waltham will maintain low residential taxes and residents will know where their tax dollars are going.

I will:

- Work to update traffic signalization to be a more modernized, safe and convenient for residents;
- Work with residents and department heads to prepare a long range capital improvement plan and maintenance schedule;
- Leverage state grants and no and low-interest loans to fund critical infrastructure needs such a traffic improvements, sewer system repairs and upgrades, and road and bridge repair;
- Enhance public transportation connections to our commuter rail stations, between neighborhoods, our commercial and business centers, and to neighboring communities;
- Push the city to take a proactive role in regional transportation planning efforts to ensure that Waltham is actively engaged in the regional context;
- Expressly consider the issues of transportation and infrastructure during the land use planning process with a goal of alleviating neighborhood traffic concerns and improving walkability and pedestrian safety;
- Lobby for a transparent budgeting system such as the state's **Open Checkbook** to enable taxpayers to understand city expenditures and the outcome of each investment;
- Promote transparency around the city's bonding process to enable taxpayers to understand our bonding capacity and the implications of future bonding for certain capital expenditures;
- Ensure that all Affordable Trust Fund monies used to develop Banks School were repaid and redirected toward the affordable housing objectives for which the Fund was intended.

## **Economic Development:**

Waltham's economic potential is **unlimited**. Our city was founded on the principles of innovation and invention, and Waltham introduced industrial efficiencies to world by making it possible to manufac-



ture watches on an assembly line. Yet today in 2017, Waltham is known for time consuming permitting, outdated and irrelevant land use plans, and arduous, inefficient and unpredictable government processes. We need not look any further than our once thriving downtown to see the impact that this anti-business attitude has had on our city. I want to return the city to a place of innovation and invention. I believe that responsible permitting is achievable through a more **professional, prompt and predictable local process**. I believe that improved transparency and communication from city hall to developers and businesses will result in a higher and better result for Waltham residents. I believe that smart growth zoning and modernized planning will make our city more livable, accessible and marketable. I will ensure that the economic engine in Waltham continues to churn at our maximum potential, providing taxes, amenities, jobs and small business creation opportunities for our residents. I will support:

- The establishment of an **Economic Development Director** position to guide policy and serve as an ombudsman for local businesses and developers;
- Establishing a **21<sup>st</sup> Century Planning Office** to be led by a qualified and experienced Planning Director;
- Creating a **Small Business Advisory Council** to coordinate the interests of small businesses in Waltham and give them an opportunity to advise and support the efforts of local government;
- Streamlining the city permitting process and implement policies that support prompt and predictable permitting. This does not mean that every project will be approved but it does mean that feedback and answers will be offered to applicants in a timely and respectful fashion;
- Establishing an actionable downtown revitalization plan to improve parking and streetscape management, and attract higher demand retail amenities in our downtown core;
- Undertaking thoughtful land use planning aimed to reduce traffic congestion, support smart growth and walkable community concepts, identify local infrastructure needs, and establish a strategy for mitigating the potential impacts of future development proposals;
- The innovation clusters in Waltham through a variety of **public-private partnerships**, such as working with existing innovation companies to promote and enhance the city's innovation economy and STEM education, and create stronger university partnerships, such as establishing a maker-space in downtown Waltham in partnership with Brandeis University.

**The City of Waltham is at a crossroads.** We can continue plodding along at a slow rate of progress, reacting to problems only after they become critical issues, and hoping that things work themselves out for the better.

## 6) Human Services

There is a large demand for **professional, coordinated human services delivery** in the City of Waltham and I believe it is incumbent upon the City's Health Department to lead that effort. Gone are the days where inspections are primary and singular focus of municipal health departments. This is an area where Waltham has severely lagged behind other municipalities at the detriment of our residents. We need a Health Department that leads on issues that address the full scope of modern-day health needs of our residents. We need a single point of contact for human services in city government and as city councillor; I will strive to ensure that happens.

I will:

- 1) Work to expand the role and scope of the Health Department to become the **Office of Health and Social Services** to oversee all of our recreation, health, senior, veteran, immigrant, nutrition, and housing services and programs, to provide coordinated and comprehensive health and social services for our residents under one roof;

- 2) Work to support and connect the efforts of the valuable private and non-profit human services agencies helping people in Waltham, such as Neighbors Who Care, Waltham Family Schools, Waltham Partnership for Youth, and Latinos en Accion.
  - a. Connecting these groups and sharing information and resources will yield a higher and better result for all organizations and the people they serve;
- 3) Partner with public safety, human service agencies and the schools to create a targeted and comprehensive program aimed at **addiction and domestic violence prevention**, an issue that is plaguing our city and requires a comprehensive, cross-departmental effort;
- 4) Support the efforts of organizations such as Waltham Fields Community Farm, who are working to provide access and education in Waltham about the nutritional value of fresh, locally grown food product, the need for sustainability and the value of open space;
- 5) Work to enhance and streamline senior programming and to fill the gaps in programs available to seniors;
- 6) Work with the Planning Director and City Hall to meet housing needs of our aging and returning veterans who need more affordable, attractive and accommodating housing in Waltham