

2020 DEMOCRATIC COMMISSIONER QUESTIONNAIRE

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I was born in East Cambridge and have had two Central Square addresses my whole life. (not many of us left!) I am a three time Cambridge City Council candidate. I've attended more Election Committee meetings than anybody else in the last four or five years and am typically the only unpaid person in the room. I'm a regular at City Council meetings and speak as warranted at both venues.

I am likely the foremost authority on Massachusetts Election Commissioners since I appear to be the only person who has ever researched the subject! I have communicated with plenty of municipal clerks and election officials statewide, the Secretary of State's Elections division, and sniffed around for information anywhere I can find it. I've made a scene at City Council meetings with my disclosures and am mighty proud of it.

I hold Bachelor and Master of Engineering degrees. I'm a licensed Real Estate broker since the 1970s, a small property owner and am a commissioned Notary Public. That's an important distinction considering the outright forgery of signatures by your Democratic Commissioners when nobody else is looking. It's exactly that cavalier attitude toward their position that needs some daylight. I haven't been a bit shy in exposing the sham amateurism that typifies the Cambridge Board of Election Commissioners.

Time Commitments and Conflicts: THIS IS A NO SHOW PATRONAGE JOB! You won't miss a single episode of Judge Judy! "Full Time" Commissioner Ward is also on the School Department payroll and will soft land elsewhere in the City if he fails to reappoint. Just don't try for the position yourself. I'm already spending nearly as much time at the Commission office as the Commissioners themselves except for election day.

I will not fail to fulfill my obligation to enforce the city's Municipal Ethics Code to protect friends as your present Commissioners will reliably do. I take responsibility very seriously.

Reason for Seeking Office: A high school teacher's father was the longest serving Election Commissioner (to my belief). I was intrigued. As one of the first flight of under 21 voters it was easy to be interested in politics. Later I looked into the Commissioner role and learned just how unique the Cambridge post is vis-a-vis other Massachusetts communities. The obligations, duties, and qualifications (none) of Commissioners are the very same throughout the state but in our city the position had become a real racket for the connected.

I readily concede that the spectacular compensation initially draws me to apply *as is the case with every other candidate and nominee*. In my case though, I just get more interested, better educated, and more committed as time goes on.

Managerial Experience: I have five decades in customer service at a local business with the highest reputation for customer service. They don't keep me in the cellar. A pollsite is remarkably similar to a retail establishment in greeting "customers", advising as needed, and

assisting with services. I have great regard for pollworkers, will treat them fairly and respectfully and advocate for rightful compensation for their services unlike your four sitting Commissioners.

Most recently I spoke out loudly against Commissioner Harris' sleazy con "debrief" session for pollworkers who she asks to appear at her convenience without compensation while she collects \$3000 monthly for no work whatsoever. Real arrogance and disrespect. I embarrassed the four Commissioners so much that they agreed to pop for pizza out of their own pockets.

Increasing Voter Participation: Repeating again what I've said as a Council candidate, Commissioner candidate, and at Election Commission meetings: the #1 portal for new registrations in Cambridge is the counter at Traffic and Parking. That's where the newly arrived residents check in for stickers and visitor permits. It's as simple as carrying a bunch of voter registration forms 200 feet. That won't happen because of present Commissioners' standard we-won't-do-that-either laziness or the possibility that I'll be properly credited for the idea?

Mark me up for the usual "Public Awareness and Social Media" pablum as well.

Voter Education: State law mandates a High School introduction to voting. Commissioner Ward can best explain how that's been working since he's already double dipping in the building.

Protection of Voter Privacy: Eligible voters, e.g. victims of domestic abuse, can obtain a *Certificate of Confidential Registration*. I'm unaware of any such usage in Cambridge.

Accuracy of Voter Lists: Here's one topic that doesn't keep me awake at night. Municipalities can purge voters who miss two consecutive state elections for brevity and efficiency. Nonetheless, someone AWOL for years can go right back to their precinct, fill out an affidavit, and cast a Provisional Ballot. If the voter hasn't moved or registered elsewhere, validity is established back at the office and the ballot finally tallies same as those on election day.

Last November a rare administrative screwup misplaced a Cambridge voter in the wrong precinct. Things got hot and heavy with the voter's insistence of eligibility near home- a situation quickly resolved by a Provisional Ballot. Commissioner Ward was coincidentally on site, ignored the situation and bailed. The voter was denied her right to vote. Customer Service?

Election Commission Staff: How do you think the nine to five staffers really feel about four prima donna no shows collecting as much as themselves for dropping by once in a while- or not? Commissioner appointees come in the door with zero elections knowledge and are supposed to act as supervisors? Reality: the people who answer the phone and greet you at the counter are great to deal with and serve very capably. I hope to know them well.

Commission Budget: Ballparking a high \$150,000 as direct cost of a citywide election is good enough for this discussion. So what about the other \$1.3 million? The Commission Budget is drawn up by the Executive Director, City Manager and Budget Chief and works exactly as every other City department- a linear incremental bump with *no review of where the money went*. Elections is a black hole. Another city a tad smaller than Cambridge finances *more* elections for

about a third as much. Cambridge taxpayers shell out a quarter of a million dollars annually in salary and benefits for four no show Commissioners while that other city spends a mere \$2000. Not even one percent of what we spend for more work. Do I have your attention yet?

Commission Operations: The Elections Department is run by an Executive Director, Assistant Director and regular staff. Call 349-4361 anytime and ask for Commissioners Charlie, Ethridge, Larry, or Victoria. They're not there. If the City manager would do *his* job and tell the "full time" Commissioners to do *theirs* we wouldn't need so many temps and part timers. Of course, customer service and efficiency would decline notably.

Election Worker Training: Contractor Lynn Haas Services trains workers on the voting machines. Additionally, Assistant Director Lesley Waxman has prepared manuals and a powerpoint slideshow tutorial. At a training session one, not more than two Commissioners stand next to the screen and read it. Any questions? The training sessions are as farcical as you should expect when three of the four Commissioners' first attendance was as instructor. To our great fortune, the pollworkers have remarkably long service and figure it out commendably.

I stopped attending these trainings in 2018 when silly rumors started about an outsider (me) learning a nonexistent secret password for the new machines. Executive Director Ford doesn't need any more nonsense.

Local Preference for Workers: I'm blackballed from working on Election Day as petty retaliation for shining light on this full circus. Did three of the four Commissioners ever work a pollsite? For practical reasons it's great if people can work in their own neighborhoods and our top wages facilitate recruitment. Turnover is remarkably low.

Early Voting: Keep your eyes on the prize- the greatest benefit of EV is de facto *no excuse absentee voting* and we must publicize and utilize this feature most prominently.

With two Early Voting elections under our belt it's time to evaluate. In 2016 a whole 37% of Cambridge voters took advantage. That fell precipitously to 25% in 2018. Here's the real issue: statewide that number was 20%. With few exceptions, Early Voting meant that City Hall or the Elections Office issued ballots onsite with only a few extra operating hours and negligible costs. Cambridge went characteristically ballistic and spent six figures. Was it worth it? In 2018 the most popular site was the Elections Office itself! Lots and lots to discuss here with the focus on location, location, location, and afterwork hours.

Election Day: Sample ballots handed out to long lines may help mitigate wait times. Regrettably, the slow ballot acceptance rate of the new machines looms as a real problem and hopefully a software fix is on the way. In a disgraceful snub your Commissioners ignored a well researched analysis of the issue by tech savvy local reporter John Hawkinson and buried it. Whatever happens, not their problem!

I'm delighted that the Executive Director finally initiated a revised set of memory card pickup routes as I suggested a couple of years ago. Now it's time to focus on delivering Absentee and Early ballots to precincts in a more timely fashion. I'm particularly well qualified to move things around in the City of Cambridge efficiently.

Recount Procedures: Last month's School Committee recount was a series of laptop button pushes by contractor LHS who then delivered the result to the Executive Director.

For full blown municipal challenge recounts hereon it's a whole new order. The new *IMAGECAST* machines do just that. Each ballot gets a unique identifier as well as an appended record of the machine's tabulation. Sounds like a pretty boring audit to me.

2020 Census: I'm uncomfortable with the question because you really need the numbers beforehand. This dribbles down from new Congressional and State districts. However, I wish to address the Election Commission's absolute biggest menace: Polling Places. We're having big problems with existing sites already- school Principals don't want us in their buildings! Lack of access for new developments like Northpoint and Alewife are well known. We've got to look outside the box and use storefronts and building lobbies as other cities do. Polls don't have to be in government facilities.

Recent Changes: I enthusiastically endorsed the municipal ballot redesign at City Council and Elections meetings emphasizing the huge contribution of Robert Winters. As I said above, Early Voting is a wonderful new opportunity that we've got to exploit to the max.

Miscellaneous: I challenge the Democratic Committee's Affirmative Action and Outreach Advisor to examine decades of Commissioner appointees. Go back sixty, even seventy Commissioner-years and add up the years a white male has occupied a seat. I hope it's more than two. What's the matter, are you afraid to talk about equal opportunity? There's a large demographic in Cambridge pretty effectively barred from service.

The Elections Department has nine full time employees. Only one is a white male and he's a Republican by statute. Unless you believe in "women's work" Elections is likely the most race and gender imbalanced agency in the City. Two of four Commissioners are black males?

While we Democrats select our nominees same as King and Queen of the Prom, our Republican counterparts shamitize the process to the lowest level. The Republican Committee's sole activity is the biennial reanointment of the alternating chairmen to the post. They ignore quorum and public notice rules to hold a koffee klatch so secret even I can't find it. The outcome is alternate candidates born before the invasion of Poland protecting their own lifetime sinecure. Like Commissioner Ward, Cmsrs. King and Marquardt only got the gig following the deaths of their predecessors. *It's not our job as Democrats to level the playing field.*

Thanks for reading. I hope to show my superb qualifications and motivation to serve as Commissioner, and equally to let the Public know just what's going on in that dark room.