

VOTER'S GUIDE LOWELL CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2003



*Do you wonder where
the candidates stand...?*

*This Voter's Guide is brought to you by the
Non-Profit Alliance of Greater Lowell.*



Introduction

In an effort to increase civic participation and education here in the City of Lowell, the Non-Profit Alliance has put together the following Voter's Guide. All 15 2003 City Council candidates were sent a letter inviting them to respond to the following five questions regarding issues of importance in Lowell. They were requested to respond to each question using 50 words or less. The responses appear as written by the candidates, with no editing by sponsors of this guide. What follows is the responses of those candidates who chose to participate. We hope you find this guide useful in making an informed choice for Lowell City Council 2003!

Lowell has 9 City Councilors who are elected at large and serve for 2-year terms. This means that voters across the city elect them every 2 years, and it is the responsibility of each City Councilor to represent the entire city. Lowell has a Plan E form of government under Massachusetts General Law. A Plan E form is a City Manager form, which means the City Council appoints a person to serve as the City Manager, and it is the responsibility of the City Manager to manage the daily operations of the entire city.

This Voter's Guide is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Khmer and can be picked up at Voter Information Sites, as listed on the following page.

Questions 1-5

1. Some people in Lowell believe that electing council members by district would increase the diversity of the Lowell City Council and give neighborhoods direct representation. What do you believe?
2. Many current residents in Lowell are in need of affordable housing. How would you address this issue?
3. What do you believe are the top 3 concerns of Lowell's immigrants and refugees and how do you plan on addressing at least one of these concerns?
4. Given the Bush administration's projections of long term federal deficits through 2010 and the Commonwealth's fiscal problems, what preparations will you make to prepare the City for further federal and state cutbacks? Include specific recommendations for cuts and increasing revenues.
5. Numerous news reports have documented the amount of gunfire, assaults, and other crimes (from simple nuisance to drug sales to more violent crimes) in Lowell. How would you address this?

Voter Information Sites

Downtown

Community Teamwork, Inc.

167 Dutton St.
Lowell, MA 01852
978-459-0551

United Teen Equality Center

10 Kirk St.
Lowell, MA 01852
978-441-9949

The Acre

Lowell Community Health Center

585-597 Merrimack St.
Lowell, MA 01854
978-937-9700

Back Central

Mass. Alliance of Portuguese Speakers

11 Mill St.
Lowell, MA 01852
978-970-1250

Lower Highlands

Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell

657 Middlesex St.
Lowell, MA 01851
978-458-4526

Order of candidates was decided through a random selection process.

JONEX OSLAN

1. Council Representation:

I believe it is a good idea, but it is not necessary if the councilor make it important enough to meet with residents and get to know the people as well as their issues. It is easier to solve issues with residents that are knowledgeable and comfortable with the leaders in the community.

2. Affordable Housing for Current Residents:

We need to maintain the cost of housing affordable. This can be accomplished by getting as many involved as possible. Landlords need to keep the rents moderate, the price of Real Estate also needs to be attracting. The more Leaders involved in assisting with the diverse programs on affordable housing would be of greater help especially for the first time buyer.

3. Concerns of Immigrants and Refugees:

Acceptance, communication, job market. These problems make it difficult to advance or earn better pay. Being more familiar with the city, employment, and how to communicate easier with others would put these concerns more at ease. We need to organize assistance to help integrate the immigrants into the system.

4. Fiscal Decision-making:

Focus on program administration, not on program results. Cuts are sometimes inevitable; we must learn surviving skills to cope with cuts. Private and public businesses must come together for more employment. Money must be on the hands of the user to improve financial crisis. Quality management, financial control, fiscal discipline.

5. Public Safety:

We must improve communication skills between officials and residents to gain the trust of the community. Police would be able to gain more assistance from citizens thus cutting back on crime activities. To gain cooperation from the people and being notified of crime activities would certainly help controlling crime.

PAULETTE RENAULT-CARAGIANES

1. Council Representation:

I believe that a combination of at large and district-based seats would be highly beneficial for the City. It would increase the potential for diversity on many levels, racially and ethnically as well as socioeconomically, and would also likely increase citizen participation and voter numbers.

2. Affordable Housing for Current Residents:

Home ownership lends stability to a community; therefore continued support of first time buyer programs is necessary, particularly encouraging owner occupancy for multifamily homes. Since homeownership is not always an option, the need for vigorous, consistent, and need based targeting of code enforcement is vital to increasing safe affordable housing.

3. Concerns of Immigrants and Refugees:

My perception is that the concerns are a feeling of safety, connection to the larger community, and feeling of connection to government, all linked to access or perception to access. If elected, I would set up regular monthly public office hours with translation assistance for constituents to share their concerns.

4. Fiscal Decision-making:

There is only one way to tackle this issue, through long term planning and consistent revisiting of priorities. This type of process will lead to a course of action that largely avoids reactive decision-making, allowing government to provide services most crucial to the welfare of the residents of Lowell.

5. Public Safety:

I subscribe to the broken windows theory; paying attention to small problems before they escalate into crisis situations. A coordinated response from both public and private sources is an effective means of dealing with this, but can only happen when community leadership is aware of problems AND available community assets.

RICHARD P. HOWE

1. Council Representation:

I am a strong advocate of the Plan E form of government as presently structured. Having a nine member City Council elected at large is much more beneficial to the City than having 11 separate district representatives. The at large City Council is accountable to all the residents of the City as opposed to district representatives where each member is answerable and accountable to his/her ward or district.

2. Affordable Housing for Current Residents:

The City has addressed this issue through the rehabilitation of abandoned mills, buildings, etc., and converting the same to affordable housing units as opposed to market rate housing. A prime example is the Surf Building on Bridge Street where some members of the Council advocated market rate housing. After much discussion and confrontation, the project ultimately was developed as affordable housing.

3. Concerns of Immigrants and Refugees:

The number one priority has to relate to education of immigrants and refugees. It is my understanding many individuals who arrive in Lowell can neither read nor write in their native language. With education there is an understanding of the system of government including the rules, regulations and laws that will allow immigrants and refugees to become part of our melting pot.

4. Fiscal Decision-making:

Taking into consideration that approximately 80% of the municipal budget constitutes salaries, wages and fringe benefits, any cuts or reductions must come through reduction in the employment force. In addition, due to the complexity and flexibility of the operation of government, it would be unwise to suggest any significant cuts with any degree of specificity.

5. Public Safety:

Over the past number of years, we have increased the number of public safety employees and have been able to control and reduce violent crimes. Through education, training and understanding of the law, it can act as a deterrent to those who are prone to violate the law. If you commit a crime, you do the time.

JAMES MILINAZZO

1. Council Representation:

I feel that the geographic size of Lowell limits District Representation. Further, I believe that neighborhood groups are respected and are being heard by the City Council. Therefore, I would not support District Representation.

2. Affordable Housing for Current Residents:

I have a great deal of experience and interest in Affordable Housing issues. I would work with the Planning Office, neighborhood groups, and non-profit groups involved in the development of affordable housing to address the need. More specifically, I would support the city's efforts to create affordable family housing as required by the Replication Plan approved by DHCD.

3. Concerns of Immigrants and Refugees:

1-Employment, 2- Housing, 3-Public Safety.

-Housing: Continue to work with the city, DHCD and LDFC to promote affordable housing opportunities; including home ownership for first time buyers; support city's Replication Plan.

4. Fiscal Decision-making:

Difficult to say since I am not a current City Councilor. I would pledge to work with Congressman Meehan, Sen. Panagiotakos and other members of the State Delegation to identify federal/state resources. I would also support more oversight by the City Council Finance Subcommittee.

5. Public Safety:

I would work with Chief Ed Davis and the neighborhood groups to identify problem areas and work on solutions. I support Community Policing and believe Public Safety is key to improving our neighborhoods.

EDWARD BUD CAULFIELD

1. Council Representation:

I disagree, Lowell has been very successful with the present form of government every neighborhood and citizen is represented in a very professional way.

2. Affordable Housing for Current Residents:

Affordable housing is a serious problem in Lowell and throughout the nation. President Bush and Congress should make this a priority, and provide Funding for affordable decent housing not only in Lowell but throughout the Country.

3. Concerns of Immigrants and Refugees:

Housing, Employment, Education. Education can certainly improve your housing and your work. Lowell Public Schools offer Adult Education in the evenings and the City Council voted to spend \$275,000,000 to renovate or construct new schools for our children.

4. Fiscal Decision-making:

Manager Cox and the City Council has already implemented a hiring freeze, early retirement, cutting the budget and no salary increases for municipal employees. Working together we will get through this fiscal dilemma. Raising property taxes is not the solution.

5. Public Safety:

I have requested and received additional police patrols in those neighborhoods with an increase in crime. I have attended neighborhood meetings and encouraged people to start a neighborhood crime watch. Crime has decreased in the Lower Highlands and throughout the city.

DARIUS MITCHELL

1. Council Representation:

I believe that diversity can be reached through community education programs. The programs would educate citizens on rules, history, and the importance of taking part in the American Diplomatic process.

2. Affordable Housing for Current Residents:

First city officials should encourage financial institutes to make mortgage financing available through public-private partnerships. Second, if “National and Local Leaders” can give local business a tax break per employee. Then we should think about the same for working families who invest in local businesses.

3. Concerns of Immigrants and Refugees:

I feel that affordable housing, legal employment and quality health. All are important, but affordable house is the issue everyone asks me about. I would address this problem the same as question 2. Encourage investments in the working family.

4. Fiscal Decision-making:

First, city officials should organize a meeting with the mayor of Springfield to discuss his city prescription plan. This plan buys prescription drugs from Canada, at a lesser cost. These are the same drugs we buy, minus advertising! Lowell would save at least \$4 million.

5. Public Safety:

News reports always document the negative in our community. We have the first Cambodian elected official, a Hispanic male, and an African-American running for office. Where’s that media report? If these same citizens were caught selling drugs or guns, what would happen? “Community Leaders” need to reach out to the youth!

RITA MERCIER

1. Council Representation:

I believe that the structure is all right as it is. If you're an effective Councilor you deliver and serve all area's of the city not just your one section. We are all taxpayers and equal. The Plan E form of Gov. is fine with me. If people believe that you can do the job you will be elected no matter what form of Government.

2. Affordable Housing for Current Residents:

It is an important issue. It is being addressed and I have and will support any housing plan before the Council that addresses affordable housing. LHA units of housing, first time home buyers program development rehab that offers so many units for low & moderate income. Juliene Steele-project, etc.

3. Concerns of Immigrants and Refugees:

1. jobs 2. housing for low income & newly arrived immigrants. 3. education i.e. - ESL programs, citizenship programs
Jobs- by offering incentives to business owners-perfect example is designation as being a renewal community.

4. Fiscal Decision-making:

Workforce reduction, hiring freeze, control of spending, search for more grants instead of pulling money from budget.

5. Public Safety:

By holding the Superintendent's feet to the fire to step up the heat. We are only as good as our police dept monitors this problem. I feel this council has stepped up to the plate by demanding this problem be addressed with training, implementation & enforcement. Programs such as weed and seed, Mayor of the Street programs, etc.