**Cambridge Citizens Coalition**

**2023 Questionnaire for City Council Candidates**

**Rev. Vernon Walker**

I How strongly do you support these issues before the city? #1 is high (for); #2 is moderate; #3 is low (against)

1. **More Accountable City Government:** Your support for greater transparency/accountability in the city.
   1. **1.** 2. 3 \_Circle the number that most represents your views.
   2. How have you personally been involved in addressing this? Explain.

I supported the Act on Mass Transparency campaign that they started in 2020 to make voting more public to the state elected officials. I was the Public Policy Director of the Young Dems of Massachusetts (YDMA) from 2019-2021 and I pushed for my committee to support it. I talked with YDMA Board of Directors to support it but there was pause in publicly supporting it because of what Act on Mass was doing on social media on calling people out. I was able to convey to the board that the public policy committee supports the pledge.

1. **Housing:** Your support for new AH0 (Affordable Housing Overlay) up-zoning amendment
   1. **1.** 2. 3 \_Circle the number that most represents your views.
   2. How have you personally been involved to address this? Explain.

I support the AHO as I know some middle-class and low-income folks are being priced out of living in Cambridge because of the high cost of living. I support the AHO because it would allow developers that commit to building 100% affordable housing buildings to build taller buildings under the amendment.

1. **Transportation:** Your support for re-evaluating city’s bike lane/traffic/parking infrastructure and plans.
   1. **1.** 2. 3 \_Circle the number that most represents your views.
   2. How have you personally been involved to address this? Explain.

I support the need for more protected bike lanes in the city as I have signed the Cambridge Bicycle Safety pledge. My campaign will make it public that I signed the pledge in the coming weeks on social media and my campaign website. The pledge entails supporting the rapid implementation of a citywide network of protected bicycle lanes that the Cycling Safety Ordinance passed in 2019. In 2020 there was amendments to the Ordinance that calls for 25 miles of separated bike lanes within 5-7 years. I fully support this as I am a biker myself.

1. **Environment:** Your support for keeping our mature trees (in schools, housing, parks, & other contexts)?
   1. **1.** 2. 3 \_Circle the number that most represents your views.
   2. How have you personally been involved to address this?

In 2021 I stood in solidarity with Mothers Out Front and CCC on a rally in front of city hall that called for support of an ordinance from the city council to protect mature trees. In my day job I am the director of the Communities Responding to Extreme Weather (CREW) and one of the things we do is help prepare communities for heatwaves through educational events. CREW conducts educational workshops in underserved communities about how to stay cool during extreme heat. We also provide energy efficient AC units and cooling kits to attendees that come.

II. We are interested in how knowledgeable and active candidates are in city issues. (Short answer – 1-2 sentences)

1. What is the one key problem/issue you want to achieve in City Council next term?

One issue that I want to achieve in the next City Council term is a policy order that helps prepare residents for extreme weather that impacts Cambridge. I want to advocate for a policy order that would require one of the city departments to provide educational material to residents on how to prepare for flooding, heatwaves, extreme cold, etc. Part of policy order would require the city CDD to reach out to community-based organizations and hospitals to jointly work together to conduct climate resiliency educational workshops throughout the city. We need more climate adaptation policies that are designed to help prepare and protect people from extreme weather.

Explain any role you have had as Councilor or resident in related actions.

I am the director of the CREW program and what we do is offer educational material to residents that live in urban heat islands that helps prepare them for extreme weather.

1. What City Council decision over the last term are you most supportive of?

I am supportive of the Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance that requires large buildings to reduce their

emissions to net-zero by 2035 or pay a compliance fee.

Explain any role you have had as Councilor or resident in related actions.

I spoke at a Green New Deal Rally in 2021 in front of city hall in support of policies that would help lower

carbon emission in our city. It was organized by Sunrise Cambridge and the office of Councilor Zondervan.

1. What City Council decision were you most disappointed in the last Council term?

That the City Council did not pass an ordinance to allow a ballot question to be placed on the ballot this November for Cambridge voters to vote on if the Police Review and advisory board should be elected.

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions.

I had no role.

1. What City Staff decision over the last Council term are you most supportive of?

The Board of Zoning Appeals unanimously approved an 18-unit East Cambridge condominium recently that includes four affordable units.

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions.

I had no role.

1. What City Staff decision were you most disappointed in the last Council term?

The decision to not have a fourth season of outdoor entertainment at Starlight Square. While this was the decision of Cambridge’s Board of Zoning Appeal.

Explain any role you have had as Councillor or resident in related actions.

I had no role.

III. What Issues Help Define You? Highlight those core interests/goals for the 2024-6 Council and explain why.

**\_\_\_\_More balance in commercial and residential needs**

In a city that is 66 percent renters, we need more affordable housing options for people to live in the city. I also think we need to do think about adding housing in consideration of commercial needs.

\_\_\_\_More budget accountability

\_\_\_\_**More engagement by residents**

We need more community engagement from the city departments to invite people to be involved in the city government matters. The city departments should do a more robust job of engaging residents overall, esp. those who lived in underserved communities like the Port.

\_\_\_\_**More equity in healthcare, environment, schooling, housing, and related issues**

Cambridge is a wealthy city, but we do need more equity in housing.

**\_\_\_\_More transparency in Council and City decision-making**

The Council votes are public. I think we need more transparency in the city’s decision-making and what are all the factors considered before different city departments decide on matter.

\_\_\_\_More prioritization of historic building reuse

**\_\_\_\_More support for local businesses**

With so much commercial buildings being built, the city should ensure that local businesses have the resources they need to thrive are not displaced.

\_\_\_\_A more multi-dimensional and resident-engaged city planning

\_\_\_\_**A more inclusive environmental policy**

The city should be helping residents understand the connection between racial justice and climate justice and tackling these issues together. I think the city could do a better job of informing people on how they can be safe during extreme weather.

\_\_\_\_**A more comprehensive transportation policy**

I think the city could provide funding for bicycle safety and allow all new riders that join the Blue Bike program, a month of free ride passes. This could potentially incentivize more bike ridership.

\_\_\_\_Other (explain in 1-2 sentences)

IV. What incident or set of concerns got you interested in running for City Council?

I become interested in running this year for City Council because I am concerned about the impacts that extreme weather

is having on our city, the lack of affordable housing units available in the city, and the lack of equitable representation of

renters on the Council. The city is 66 % renters, and we only have one renter that is seeking re-election on the Council.

Renters deserve representation. We know that the city will face more flooding from sea level-rise, stronger rainstorms and

More summer hot days. We need to prepare people to be ready for the extreme weather events as the impacts are

Inevitable. My experience as a faith leader has taught me how to be a bridge builder and work with diverse people. I

believe my background in community organizing, climate justice, social justice, and housing justice work has prepared me

for the role of City Councilor.

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