



City Councilor Survey Responses - Lisa Gordon

1. Do you support the Mayor's "Booster Stabilization Fund"? What are its strengths and what should change?

Am I pleased that we suddenly have a considerable amount of money available to help our city and do I understand that these are one-time funds, not an on-going revenue stream? YES. Do I think that we should limit our ability to use these funds in the manner that the Mayor has proposed? NO. We need to have flexibility, including using some portion of these funds to provide additional money to the schools NOW.

2. What do you view as the relationship between new development (housing, commercial) and the schools?

Newton needs to be an inclusive and welcoming community and we should have housing options that our teachers and city workers can afford. In order to create affordable housing stock we must plan thoughtfully for the infrastructure needs associated with significant population growth, especially for our schools. We must also continue to preserve housing that is currently affordable during the transition. Having varied housing options above commercial buildings in village centers and townhouses and multi-families will aid in this. Partnering exclusively with for-profit developers to meet our affordable needs only increases the cost of living in Newton, it does not decrease it. Instead of stabilizing rent prices, we currently see rents in new multi-unit buildings trending in excess of \$5,000/month for a two-bedroom. The work to plan for an inclusive, affordable and diverse Newton needs to be done now, and not only after we see a considerable amount of new development with no thoughtful planning. This means if we intend for our housing supply to increase by up to 75%, the strategic planning must start now towards smart and resilient infrastructure for the schools to endure future challenges such as room size growth, climate and health impacts, and the evolving emotional and well-being needs of both the students and the faculty.

3. Please share your thoughts on the national teacher shortage, and how it impacts Newton's ability to attract and retain strong educators. Does a city councilor have a role? What is it?

*Through my work in addressing food and housing insecurity, I know the importance of a living wage. On a personal note, my college-age daughter is currently a double major, with education as one of her majors. She will graduate in 2024 and I would hope that she can get a job that will compensate her appropriately. **The national teacher shortage affects all communities, including Newton, in attracting and retaining teachers. As local leaders, City Councilors can advocate for measures at the state and federal levels to address this shortage, while also addressing the structural barriers right here in our backyard.** As the cost of housing and living outpaces the rise in educator wage growth year-over-year around the country, in the state, and in Newton, the City Council can alleviate this barrier to attracting, hiring, and retaining educators by ensuring our vision for the City's future includes addressing our housing and transportation plan in such a way that those who work here, can live here. From my own personal experience, and my daughter's, I've seen how long an educator's day is, how early it starts and how late it ends, only to be appended by a minimum of 30-60 minutes of commuting each way and the associated time-cost of travel (fuel, public transportation commutes and passes,*

bus/train schedule disruptions, etc.). Our educators are parents and caregivers, too, and we should always keep that in sight when making decisions about the future of Newton Public Schools.

4. Operating overrides help ensure the health of our schools. What is your plan for and role in ensuring successful overrides?

I voted for the override to support the health of our schools, and I've been in the fight to save programs at NSHS from budget cuts such as the award winning Jazz program. Planning, purpose, and clarity is how a successful campaign is won. The plan for why we need an override should be carefully developed, including anticipating arguments that will be made against it. The purpose needs to be focused, and stated clearly, with an emphasis on how additional funds will improve outcomes, whether in schools or city services. I was disappointed to see that the landscape shifted after the override vote was unsuccessful, because I believe when voters lose faith in their leaders the perception of not being provided the whole picture arises. As your Ward 6 Councilor, I will always work to make sure that we ensure the health of our schools by taking care not just of our current educators, but also our retired educators by keeping our commitment to City retirees.

5. The current contract offers teachers a COLA of 2% or less. NPS Unit C employees report a non-living wage. Do you believe it is reasonable to expect the NTA to accept the current terms? How can you, as a city councilor, advocate for a fair contract?

I support a living wage for all employees and will work hard to advocate for additional resources for our schools and its employees. Housing justice is something I have worked tirelessly towards in my professional career and my personal life. The current plan for village center overlay districts has no mandate or requirement for non-profit developers which I fundamentally believe will continue to perpetuate the structural barrier that those who work in Newton are unable to live in Newton. As your Ward 6 Councilor, I will continue on my lifelong path of advocacy for a fair and equitable society that treats and pays people with dignity and respect.