



## City Councilor Survey Responses - Alicia Bowman

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

*I support more money being directed to the schools. However, I do not think the plan for the Booster Stabilization Fund before the Council is as good as it needs to be. I am concerned about the funding schedule. More money should be allocated in the coming fiscal years and spread over a shorter period of time. We have large, unmet needs in the schools right now given the level of budget cuts last year and the continued effects of learning interruptions during COVID.*

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

*With Prop 2 1/2 communities in Massachusetts are limited to a maximum growth in property tax revenue of 2.5% plus new growth. Excellent schools require good funding and expenses are certainly growing faster than 2.5%. Communities can pass overrides which Newton has a mixed record on and certainly has had fewer overrides than many similar communities. Thus, Newton is highly dependent on the new growth to meet our current budget needs.*

*New growth means more revenue and more school children, both of which are positive for schools. New development generates increased property taxes, building permit fees, and established mitigation funds. Additional residents of Newton are paying excise taxes, paying their water and sewer bill, eating in restaurants, and shopping in local stores. All of these are financially beneficial to the city and mean more money for the schools. Our schools are currently facing declining enrollment. New development will increase housing opportunities, including those for young families.*

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?

*The shortage of teachers is due to several factors including the failure of many communities to pay wages that are competitive with other industries and wages that would enable teachers to afford to live in the communities they are teaching in. This is certainly true of Newton. When my father-in-law taught in Newton, most Newton teachers lived in Newton. Now most teachers can't afford to live in Newton or anywhere reasonably close by.*

*City Council does not set the budget for schools but we should all support funding of NPS sufficient for competitive wages. City Council can and should approve zoning that will allow for the building of more homes, especially modestly priced homes that could be affordable to more teachers and other city employees.*

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

*I was a strong yes on all three override questions. **Ensuring a successful override requires more communication, full support from elected leaders and a better understanding by all of the risks of not passing the override.** I found many people swayed by information on Newton taxes as compared to peer communities and Newton educational spending about our foundation budget as compared to peer communities. I detail them in this email. <https://mailchi.mp/aliciabowman/support-the-override>*

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?**

***As I stated above I think that it is critical that Newton should fund competitive wages if we want to be able to attract and retain the best teachers. And all staff in our schools should be paid a living wage.** While we don't have a direct role in the contract process, we can be working to ensure the best financial future for the city so that the funds are there to pay our teachers and staff what they deserve.*