



## City Councilor Survey Responses - Martha Bixby

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

*First, I want to say that I am grateful for the work the Parent Educator Collaborative has done to build relationships, share information, and create opportunities for advocacy.*

*At this moment, our priority should be to invest in tangible improvements to our schools, roads, and open spaces, in a way that will restore trust and people's connection to what our city is and can be. We can and should direct more of this year's budget surplus to these investments, focusing on opportunities where we will save on maintenance and bring back community buy-in which is crucial to continuing long-term investment in our schools by making investments now.*

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

*Smart, thoughtful new commercial and housing development can help increase our city's tax base, which will help us increase investments in our schools.*

*Currently, enrollment is projected to decrease across our district - even factoring in the housing developments currently in the construction pipeline. We have already seen the impacts of this. I fought hard to make sure that hundreds of students in our district didn't bear the disproportionate burden of entering classrooms of ~30 children this year. Though this didn't happen at the elementary level, thanks in part to our advocacy, certain schools had each been chosen to have teaching positions cut because, due to declining enrollment, they had smaller grades (fewer kids overall across the grade) which administrators thought could be reduced to fewer, larger classrooms.*

*Enrollment declines have many sources, including generational demographics and families choosing private school, but lower enrollment numbers due to our regional housing shortage should be a part of the conversation.*

*As our city debates development, I hope that we do not lose focus on all the other things that go into making Newton the city we love. Having strong neighborhood schools that are full of amazing educators and students is a big piece of what makes Newton, Newton. We must continue to invest in and support our schools to keep this cherished part of our community identity thriving.*

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?

*With two young kids in NPS, I am so incredibly grateful for each and every teacher and staff member who pursues a career in education, and recognize there are many who*

*make incredible personal sacrifices to do so for the sake of our children, and our future. While PTO president and in conversations with friends and neighbors I have heard many of the issues that affect our educators - from poor building conditions, insufficient pay, instability, negativity towards the profession, and more.*

*City councilors can have a role in supporting our educators and combating local teacher shortages by advocating for a fair budget, elevating the voices and perspectives of educators and students, working to increase "missing middle" and workforce housing, and using their position as elected officials in our city to speak out on issues that matter to our schools.*

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

*We are constrained by the state law of Proposition 2.5 unless we pass overrides. Newton's tradition of only attempting overrides every decade or so makes the stakes quite high.*

*In order to potentially increase revenue in the future, we must invest now to help create a sense of trust and have people actually see what an increase in funding can achieve.*

*City councilors can help residents understand why funds should increase through an override and not from cuts, reallocations, or from other revenue sources. Councilors can push for greater budget transparency and understanding of the potential impacts of budget cuts. In this past override, seeing the impacts of a failed override come as a surprise after the fact to many affected families was quite frustrating. Families only knew their child would be in a classroom with many more students, or a kindergarten class with no aides, or not have access to music programs, after the override didn't pass. If residents who care about our schools understood these cuts would be an impact of the operating override not passing, I believe they might have been more supportive of the override proposal.*

**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 greater COLA, which would be fair to our educators and allow us to attract and retain the talented professionals that make our district great.*

*As stated above, councilors can help amplify the voices and perspectives of our educators and the many students who are speaking out in support of their teachers. If elected, I would be among a handful of councilors with children in NPS, which would allow me to advocate for students, teachers, and families from a first-hand perspective.*