

A Vision for Boston: Questions for the 2009 District City Council Candidates

EMPLOYEE SPENDING

As a candidate for City Council what do you think is the best way to control the growth in employee compensation and ensure a sustainable workforce? How will you manage spending for employees, particularly health insurance and pension costs? What steps will you take to restructure and re-prioritize city services? How will you determine the optimal, sustainable level of city and school employees?



District 7

Chuck Turner

A) Cost control of union contracts: Set cost of living as a minimum goal for salary increases. Percentage of raise above cost of living should be calibrated to projections of new growth revenues. The City's bargaining goal should be to establish similar increases for all unions. Those already receiving higher salaries should not receive higher percentage raises.

B) Cost control of administrators: Percentage increase should be no more than the percentage increase given to union employees.

C) Cost control of elected officials: The Council should send a home rule petition to the state legislature tying raises every two years to rise and fall of cost of living across the three year period.

D) Control of budget growth: Each department should have to engage in zero based budgeting where the department head begins by defining goals and performance objectives and then establishes staffing based on the staff necessary to carry out performance objectives. The documents emerging out of the planning process should be made available to the public. There should be at least one meeting in every district to discuss goals and performance objectives in at least the major departments.

District 8

Oscar Brookins

We must re-invent the concept of service among municipal employees and get out of the game of trying to make municipal employment compete with corporate employers for the mass of our employees. We cannot be committed to a scheme that provides employment stability with ever rising payment packages. The city must develop a long term program rather than a program of hiring employees when revenues are plentiful. We must recognize revenues are cyclical but avoid revenue driven employment policies.

Michael Ross

During the FY2010 budget process, my colleagues and I had to make many difficult choices in order to ensure that our budget woes did not take teachers out of our children's classrooms or remove police officers from our streets. Balancing the need for the services that municipal

employees do for our city and the meeting the challenges presented by the current economic climate is one of the biggest challenges facing Boston.

I believe we can more efficiently utilize our staff if the city of Boston becomes more data-driven. Too many resources are dependent upon a call from a constituent, a city councilor, or a community leader. Boston should embrace GIS/mapping resources to better deploy city resources. We need to see where our resources are going to make sure we have the right number of employees working in all areas of the city. We must also engage union leaders as we negotiate new contracts to adequately compensate their members without increasing the city's pension and health care costs.

District 9

Mark Ciommo

A cost efficient and effective city workforce is essential to the betterment of Boston. Negotiating prudent city and union contracts as well as efficient health insurance plans will result in taxpayer savings. Modernizing our city's workforce will also help control spending. We must also focus on our long term financial goals, maintaining a balanced budget and efficiently tracking city services in order to help reduce costs. The City of Boston has had a hiring freeze in affect since last October and should only fill positions that are determined to be absolutely essential to provide city services. Also, I support the continuation and increase of payments into the OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits) account. We must continue to come to terms with this rising unfunded liability our city faces.