

Boston Municipal Research Bureau & Dorchester Reporter 2025 Candidate Questionnaire

Submitted by: Erin J. Murphy, Boston City Councilor At-Large

Section 1: BACKGROUND/PERSONAL

1. What is your name, age, and neighborhood where you live?

My name is Erin J. Murphy. I'm 55, and I have the privilege of living in Dorchester, where I was born, raised, and raised my family. This community shaped who I am, and it's where I continue to live, work, and serve my neighbors every day.

2. What is your present occupation? Also, please list your professional, academic, and civic accomplishments.

I currently serve as your Boston City Councilor At-Large, focusing on quality of life issues, public safety, education, and community advocacy across the city. Prior to this, I served 24 years as a Boston Public School teacher, advocating for students' and their families' needs.

In addition to my professional work, I am a proud single mother of four children—one serving in the Army, one working as an engineer, and one teaching in the Boston Public Schools. Raising my children as a solo parent taught me resilience, patience, and the importance of showing up every day. These lessons guide my work in the community and help me relate to residents' challenges, understand their needs, and advocate for them consistently. I am also a lifelong learner, having completed yoga teacher training and earned my instructor license, continually seeking new knowledge and skills to grow personally and professionally.

I have been recognized for my impact and leadership in the community, including:

- **EXTRAordinary Woman Award** – For running the Boston Marathon three times to raise funds and help remove the stigma around addiction and mental health, and for ongoing advocacy for recovery programs and services across the city.
- **James F. Gavin Award** – For my dedication to families struggling with addiction. Drawing from my personal journey, I have raised awareness, advocated for treatment access, and supported those in recovery. My efforts, including fundraising through the Boston Marathon, reflect my commitment to breaking the stigma around addiction and providing hope to families in need.
- **Governor's Unsung Heroine Award** – For years of dedication to my community. I have consistently given back, showing up for my neighbors, advocating for local needs, and working tirelessly to make my neighborhood a stronger, safer, and more supportive place for everyone.

3. Please detail your educational background and achievements.

I began my higher education at UMass Boston in 1988 and, as a teenage mother, earned my B.S.

in Business Management, History, and Elementary Education in 1999, balancing school with raising my family. I went on to earn a Master's in Education from Fitchburg State University in 2007. I hold teaching certifications across early childhood, special needs, elementary education, and English as a Second Language. I am a lifelong learner and have also completed yoga teacher training and earned my instructor license, continually seeking new ways to grow both personally and professionally.

4. Please list some of your affiliations with non-profits, civic associations, and political groups.

I have been deeply involved in supporting recovery, mental health, and community programs. I raised over \$60,000 for the Gavin Foundation through three consecutive Boston Marathon runs and have served on gala and committee leadership teams. I have been honored with multiple awards, including the Governor's Unsung Heroine Award, EXTRAordinary Woman of Boston, and the James F. Gavin Award.

I have also contributed to a wide array of community initiatives, including the South Boston Health Center, Recovery Corps (Mayor's Office of Recovery Services), Dorchester Day Parade, local libraries, and athletic organizations. My family legacy through my grandfather, Richard J. Murphy, for whom a school is named, continues to inspire my commitment to civic service. I am proud to have strong support and endorsements from labor unions, public safety organizations, and elected officials who recognize my dedication to the community.

5. What in your experience to date will most help you to be an effective leader?

My 24 years as a Boston Public School teacher and special education coordinator grounded me in listening, problem-solving, and advocating for families in diverse communities. As a single mother, I bring empathy, resilience, and firsthand understanding of the challenges families face.

Over the past four years as your At-Large Boston City Councilor, I have already demonstrated effective leadership, showing up in every neighborhood, engaging residents, and delivering results-driven solutions. I have fought for safer streets, stronger schools, affordable housing, and expanded programs for seniors, veterans, youth, and working families. My work ethic, integrity, and commitment to standing up for Boston families have allowed me to turn experience into action, proving that I can lead with compassion, grit, and tangible results.

From the classroom to City Hall, I bring real-world experience, honesty, and heart to every decision, always putting Boston families first.

6. What are the three accomplishments you're most proud of?

1. Being a mom and showing up for my family, knowing my grown children have become great young adults, including one active veteran, one school teacher, and one engineer.

2. Completing three Boston Marathons and the Chicago Marathon to raise funds and awareness for addiction recovery and mental health, earning the James F. Gavin Award and other recognitions along the way.
3. Upholding a legacy of community service rooted in my family's history, ensuring residents' needs are consistently centered in City Hall through advocacy, transparency, and accessibility, and successfully transitioning from a rewarding career in teaching into public office, earning broad community support and winning At-Large Council seats in both 2021 and 2023.

7. When not on the campaign trail, how do you relax?

This job is 24/7, but I make an effort to prioritize time with my family, friends, and my adorable dog, Murphy. I enjoy running, walking along the Neponset River Trail, and getting lost in a good book. I also find joy in the countless community events I attend each week, connecting with fellow Bostonians, celebrating local culture, trying new foods, and visiting coffee shops and small businesses. Meeting and chatting with shop owners and workers, and enjoying ice cream, coffee, and good food, makes every day fun and special, keeping me grounded in the city I love.

Section 2: POLITICS & ELECTIONS

1. What is your party affiliation and how would you characterize your political ideology?

I am a proud Democrat. My approach is rooted in common sense, hard work, and ethics. I focus on showing up, advocating for residents, and finding practical solutions that make life better in Boston. I believe in compromise when necessary without giving up core values and in delivering results that support public safety, working families, and opportunities for all.

2. Please name up to three (and at least one) of your political role models. Please feel free to explain your choices.

I was at Boston Latin Academy during Mel King's historic 1983 mayoral campaign when he became the first Black candidate to reach Boston's general election and built a powerful Rainbow Coalition uniting communities across the city. I remember the posters on the hallway walls, and that moment stayed with me. It taught me the power of perseverance, coalition building, and believing in your vision. I carried that with me on my own path to the Boston City Council. I ran in 2019, came up short, but never lost sight of the goal. I ran again, stayed in neighborhoods, and earned a seat. Like Mel King showed, the work does not end

on Election Day. It is about showing up, building trust, and continuing to fight for your city.

My grandfather, Richard J. Murphy (Dick), and my grandmother, Marge Murphy, held leadership roles in the Pope's Hill Neighborhood Association, founded in 1957. They understood that neighborhoods working alone do not always get what they want, but when they join forces, they can accomplish more. Building on that work, my grandfather helped form the Dorchester United Neighborhood Association (DUNA), a coalition of civic groups. Through DUNA, he helped transform a former landfill into what is now the Richard J. Murphy School, named in his honor because of his advocacy, complete with playgrounds and fields. He also helped establish a community credit union offering low-interest microloans to working families. His election as president of PHNA and role in forming DUNA taught me the importance of local government and the power of coalition building.

I also draw inspiration from anyone willing to put their name on the ballot, even knowing the odds may not be in their favor. I call this the Independent Candidate model. Many people seek only the title, but few put in the hard work to engage voters, meet constituents, and build trust. Some have strong institutional backing, while others run independently, knocking on doors and owning every step of their campaign. What matters most is serving your community ethically, honestly, and with determination.

3. What would you do to increase voter turnout in the city of Boston, especially for local races?

While some focus on lowering the voting age or adopting ranked-choice voting, I believe the priority is engaging residents and giving them a clear reason to vote, so they know their voice matters. Boston has historically low turnout, meaning some elections are decided by only a small fraction of voters. Outreach and education are critical.

I have always been a ground-level candidate, showing up every day in neighborhoods. I ask for the vote, never take support for granted, and encourage residents to bring friends and family to the polls. I make campaign materials available in multiple languages and provide rides to polling locations when needed. I door-knock, drop thousands of pieces of literature, send targeted emails, make

reminder calls, and text registered voters. I provide clear information about early voting, vote-by-mail, and Election Day options.

Increasing turnout is about personal connection, education, and encouragement, not just policy changes. Residents need to feel their participation makes a difference, and I make it my priority to give them the information and motivation to show up.

Section 3: ISSUES & PRIORITIES

1. What is your top priority if elected? How would you use your role as a city councillor to help address or accomplish it?

As an At-Large City Councillor, my top priority is ensuring that every neighborhood and resident in Boston has access to the resources, safety, and opportunities they need to thrive. Over the past four years, I have focused on delivering real results, not just promises, on issues ranging from safe, accessible sidewalks to housing stability, public safety, and equitable city services. My 24 years as a Boston Public Schools educator have given me firsthand insight into the challenges facing students, families, and our schools, and I tirelessly advocate for them at City Hall and in the community. I will continue to use my position to support responsible development, protect tenants' rights, improve transportation and pedestrian safety, and strengthen community engagement across all neighborhoods. Being an incumbent allows me to build on this track record, turning experience and relationships into tangible improvements for residents citywide.

2. Is there a specific city agency you see as in need of urgent reform? If so, please explain.

As an At-Large City Councillor and former Boston Public Schools educator, I have spent years advocating for reforms to ensure that every student in Boston has access to a high-quality education. Despite significant investments in our schools, student outcomes remain deeply troubling. Only around 20% of Black students and roughly 11% of students with disabilities are reading at grade level. These dismal

numbers highlight the urgent need for comprehensive change in how BPS operates, allocates resources, and supports its students.

The district spends more per pupil than many comparable cities, yet we are not seeing results that match this investment. This disconnect demonstrates the need for better oversight, stronger accountability, and innovative approaches to ensure all students benefit from the resources available. One area that requires immediate attention is Madison Park Technical Vocational High School. Revitalizing Madison Park to provide modern, high-quality vocational training is essential to preparing students for both college and career success.

These challenges make it clear that Boston must prioritize safe, well-resourced, and high-quality educational options across the city. I will continue to lead these efforts by advocating for accountability, equity, and practical reforms that directly improve student learning and opportunity.

3. What is your position on residency requirements, i.e., requiring people hired by the municipal government to live in the city of Boston?

I support residency requirements for municipal employees because having city workers live in Boston fosters accountability and ensures that those making decisions are directly invested in the communities they serve. City jobs should benefit city residents, and employees living here can better understand and respond to local needs.

It is important to note that not all city employees are subject to this requirement. Teachers, for example, have never had a residency requirement and are among the higher-paid staff across the city. At the same time, many of our lowest-paid municipal workers struggle to afford living in Boston. Lifting residency requirements alone is not a solution. Any consideration of changes should be paired with policies that expand access to true workforce housing, something I have consistently advocated for on the Council. This approach balances the principle of local accountability with the practical realities of living in Boston.

4. Do you favor returning to an elected School Committee?

Yes, I favor returning to an elected School Committee. An elected body would be more directly accountable to the community, giving parents, teachers, and students

a stronger voice in educational decisions. Previous ballot measures on this issue received overwhelming support from Boston voters, reflecting a clear community desire for greater local input. Under the current system, where members are appointed by the Mayor, the Committee is not fully independent and may not always prioritize students' and families' best interests, since members are ultimately accountable to the Mayor rather than directly to the people they serve.

5. Boston is facing a housing shortage that is impacting the affordability of living in the city. Separately, the Wu administration is pursuing zoning reform to spur development in certain areas and wants to see a return of the city's population to 800,000. What is your assessment of this target, and what would your office do to balance growth with resident needs?

The target of 800,000 residents is ambitious, but Boston's housing crisis is more urgent than symbolic population goals. Housing affordability is at a breaking point: half of renters and nearly a quarter of homeowners are cost-burdened, and the annual income needed to afford a median-priced home in Boston is approximately \$150,000. These challenges make it clear that growth must be managed responsibly. I know many families, especially young families seeking to put down roots in the neighborhoods they grew up in, are being forced to move out because they are priced out despite their hard work. Similarly, seniors who have lived in Boston for decades are being displaced as rents, property taxes, and the cost of living rise beyond what fixed incomes can support.

As an At-Large City Councillor, my office has always prioritized protecting residents and neighborhoods while promoting responsible development. I advocate for policies that create more affordable housing, ensure strong tenant protections, and preserve neighborhood character. This includes supporting inclusionary zoning, advocating for publicly owned land to be used for affordable housing, and prioritizing developments that include units for working families and seniors.

Responsible growth also requires ensuring that neighborhoods can handle increased populations. When development brings more residents, as in the Seaport, city services must expand accordingly. This means planning for new EMS stations, grocery stores, libraries, polling locations, schools, and other essential services so that quality of life keeps pace with growth. My focus is on real results, not

promises. I show up in neighborhoods, work with residents, and push for accountability in housing programs to prevent displacement while ensuring that city services grow alongside population increases. Growth must benefit all residents, not just developers, and every neighborhood must have access to safe, affordable housing and adequate public services.

6. Do you support the City's current Inclusionary Zoning policy, which was revised in 2023? If not, what changes would you make?

I support the revised Inclusionary Zoning policy because it helps create more affordable housing in new developments. At the same time, it can be strengthened to ensure units are truly affordable for low- and moderate-income families.

Practical solutions I support include requiring a higher percentage of affordable units, prioritizing units for working families and seniors, and using publicly owned land for affordable housing. Implementation must be monitored closely to achieve results without unintended consequences. My goal is to expand access to housing while protecting neighborhoods and residents.

7. What is your position on rent control?

I do not support rent control. I believe long-term, practical solutions are the best way to make housing affordable while protecting neighborhoods. My focus is on expanding Inclusionary Zoning, creating true workforce housing, using publicly owned land for affordable units, and strengthening tenant protections. These policies prevent displacement and ensure development benefits all residents, not just developers. Growth must create real opportunities for families and seniors to stay in the neighborhoods they call home.

8. What is your assessment of the Wu administration's overall performance? Please offer a letter grade or pass/fail as part of your answer.

I would give the Wu administration a C-minus. While there have been some positive initiatives, such as investments in public facilities like BCYF centers, too often residents feel their voices are not being heard. The administration has

prioritized high-profile projects, while everyday issues like sidewalks, trash collection, rats, traffic, and neighborhood services remain under-addressed. True progress requires consistent accountability, transparency, and collaboration with communities. I continue to advocate for these principles as I engage with residents across every Boston neighborhood, ensuring that city government responds to the needs of all residents, not just the most visible projects.

9. The August 2024 closure of Carney Hospital left a huge hole in the city's public health sector. What would you do as a city councillor to address this problem and what is your position on how the Dorchester campus of Carney Hospital should be re-purposed or re-developed?

The August 2024 closure of Carney Hospital left a significant void in Dorchester's public health landscape. As a neighbor and someone who has relied on Carney for emergency care for my own family, I know firsthand the critical role it played in our community. The hospital was also one of the largest local employers, supporting jobs for neighborhood residents.

As an At-Large City Councillor, I have been clear that the Carney campus must remain focused on healthcare, not housing. I support the recommendations of the Dorchester Health Planning Working Group, which emphasize restoring direct healthcare services on-site, including urgent care, primary care, and behavioral health, alongside co-located social services that address broader community needs. The report also highlights the importance of engaging residents so that redevelopment decisions reflect the priorities of Dorchester and Mattapan.

My approach is to advocate for a full-service healthcare facility at the Carney site that meets both immediate and long-term needs, preserves jobs, and ensures this critical community resource is never lost again. This is about keeping essential services accessible, strengthening public health, and supporting the neighborhood workforce.

10. What are your plans to address traffic congestion, commuter safety, and transportation needs? Please discuss bike lanes as part of your answer.

As a City Councillor, I tackle traffic and safety issues by going directly to the neighborhoods to see problems firsthand. I conduct walk-throughs with residents to

assess unsafe conditions, including sidewalks, right-turn concurrent lights that I have filed to remove because they are hazardous, and other traffic hazards. I also meet with business owners and neighbors to hear their concerns about speeding, parking, and overall street safety.

I have consistently raised concerns about how bike lanes have been implemented, often overnight and without adequate community input. Many residents report seeing very few bikes using these lanes, underscoring the need for a comprehensive planning process before new installations. A prime example is Summer Street in South Boston, where bike lanes were installed quickly, residents' concerns were not fully addressed, and the lanes were later removed. My approach is hands-on and accountable. I file hearings, track city responses, and ensure that any changes to streets improve safety, meet neighborhood needs, and involve community input before they are finalized.

11. How will you approach the issue of gun violence in our communities?

Gun violence is only part of what makes people feel unsafe, and even one shooting is too many. My approach is all about enforcement, prevention, and opportunity. In my first year on the Council, I filed a hearing on summer violence and held it in the community so residents and city departments could plan a coordinated response. I work directly with city departments, the Boston Police, nonprofits, and community groups like Youth Connect to put real strategies in place that keep neighborhoods safer.

I also focus on giving young people safe alternatives. My office hosts youth interns each summer and supports sports programs, libraries, and community centers that stay open later. Residents in neighborhoods with higher incidents of violence have asked for more bike patrols and walking beats, and I've pushed for that. At the same time, I support programs that tackle the root causes of violence, including poverty, lack of opportunity, and access to education and enrichment programs.

Over the years, I've helped expand summer jobs, internships, and recreational programs through BCYF and local partners, providing meaningful opportunities for youth. I also work with Safe Street Teams and mentoring programs to foster stronger relationships and trust in our communities. Keeping Boston safe is not just

about the numbers; it is about making sure residents feel secure in their neighborhoods every day. I take a hands-on, neighborhood-first approach, working directly with city departments, police, and community groups, while also creating opportunities for young people to stay engaged and safe.

12. How would you confront the drug epidemic, safety, and sanitation issues affecting residents near Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard?

The crisis at Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard has long been a public health and safety emergency. As Chair of the Committee on Public Health, Homelessness, and Recovery in my first term on the Council, I have consistently advocated for immediate and comprehensive action, filing hearing orders to convene city departments, the Boston Public Health Commission, first responders, and community organizations to develop coordinated solutions.

The situation has expanded beyond the original encampment area, affecting neighborhoods such as the South End, Downtown, Andrew Square, and Roxbury. Residents report rising crime, public safety concerns, and sanitation problems, including rodent infestations. The displacement from cleared encampments has worsened these challenges, impacting both quality of life and local businesses.

I have spent decades working alongside organizations like the Gavin Foundation to support residents struggling with mental health and substance use, ensuring that treatment, recovery services, and practical support are accessible. I have also consistently pushed for accountability and swift action from city agencies.

Residents deserve safe streets, clear answers on how city funds are being used, and effective interventions. This includes reinstating and fully funding programs like the Community Syringe Redemption Program, which successfully reduced public health risks, and supporting efforts by local organizations to maintain safety and sanitation while long-term solutions are developed.

I have also supported initiatives such as Councilor Ed Flynn's proposal for a dedicated pest control office and the appointment of a "rat czar" to address rodent infestations citywide. My approach combines immediate intervention with preventive strategies, ensuring robust city services, restoring public order, and addressing the underlying causes of unsafe conditions. At the same time, I

prioritize protecting the quality of life for residents and businesses by advocating for humane, practical, and enforceable solutions that reduce risk and restore confidence in our neighborhoods.

13. How would you work to ensure continued accountability for the City's schools, close achievement gaps, and ensure that all BPS students receive a quality education?

As a Boston Public Schools teacher for over two decades, I have seen firsthand what it takes to support students and staff effectively. My experience at Henderson School underscored the importance of stable leadership, strong oversight, and targeted support for students, especially those facing trauma or other challenges. When these systems fail, student outcomes suffer, and families lose confidence in their schools.

Despite the \$1.58 billion BPS budget, in addition to hundreds of millions in federal ESSER resources, Boston's schools have seen limited progress in closing achievement gaps. Many Black, Latino, English learner, and special education students continue to fall behind grade-level expectations, while chronic absenteeism disproportionately affects our most vulnerable students. These trends make it clear that funding alone is not enough. Accountability and effective implementation matter most.

I have consistently voted against the BPS budget when it fails to deliver measurable results for all students. My advocacy supports a more strategic use of resources: prioritizing direct student support, expanding enrichment in arts, athletics, vocational offerings, and social-emotional programs, and ensuring school leadership and administration are held responsible for outcomes. I have also supported parent-led initiatives and school-based advocacy efforts, recognizing that families must have a voice in shaping their children's education.

I believe that moving toward an elected School Committee would strengthen accountability and ensure that community priorities guide decision-making. Through hearings, resolutions, and close oversight, I push for transparency and action, insisting that every dollar spent translates into tangible improvements in learning. Ensuring accountability, closing achievement gaps, and raising

educational quality requires a persistent, results-driven approach, and that is the work I will continue to champion for all Boston students.

14. Do you believe that BPS is adequately serving high-needs students, including English language learners and special education students, and if not, what can be done to improve their approach?

Absolutely not. Boston Public Schools serves a large number of high-needs students, but the results are insufficient. Graduation rates for students with disabilities and English learners remain well below the district average, and too many children in our early grades are falling behind in reading and math. Even with the FY26 budget of \$1.58 billion and hundreds of millions in federal ESSER funds already spent, we are not seeing meaningful improvement for our most vulnerable learners.

As a former BPS teacher with over two decades in the classroom, I know what works: stable leadership, strong oversight, smaller class sizes, and teachers equipped with the training to support diverse and trauma-affected students. Families must have a voice, and accountability cannot be optional. Programs need to be implemented effectively, and the district must focus on results, not just spending. Measures like an elected School Committee could help ensure real accountability. Our students deserve more than empty promises; they deserve schools that truly help every child succeed.

15. Most of Boston's revenues come from property taxes, and robust new growth in recent years has enabled substantial budgetary increases, an average of 5.4% over the last decade. However, new growth in FY25 was \$90.5M, 25.7% less than FY24, and a slowdown in new construction in the city may impact future proceeds from the new growth that drives the City's budget. How will you approach these budget challenges and balance the needs of residents and commercial property owners?

Boston faces growing budget challenges, particularly as new growth revenue slows, with FY25 showing \$90.5 million in new growth, a 25.7% decrease from FY24. Meanwhile, the administration continues expanding city spending despite a

potential economic slowdown and the city's heavy reliance on property taxes. Measures like the Mayor's commercial property tax shift have raised serious concerns for the business community, which sees it as more than just uncertainty. It creates real financial pressure and threatens the stability of local businesses. I have consistently had concerns about such short-term fixes, which do not address structural fiscal issues and may disproportionately impact small business owners and cause alarm for seniors, offering no real long-term relief, only quick fixes.

At the same time, some city investments, such as block party grants and other feel-good initiatives, should not overshadow the need to prioritize core services and quality-of-life improvements that directly benefit neighborhoods, including sidewalk repairs and rodent control. My approach focuses on sustainable, accountable spending, ensuring every dollar contributes to public safety, infrastructure, street safety, and essential neighborhood services, while balancing the needs of residents and the business community.

In moments like this, we must make tough, deliberate decisions to safeguard residents and business owners alike, both large and small, who invest in our neighborhoods and depend on steady, accountable city leadership.