Your Vote is Roxbury's Voice

★ROXVOTE★
Coalition

District 7 City Council Election

Municipal Election: Tuesday, November 8th, 2011
Polls are open 7 AM – 8 PM.

RoxVote Coalition Candidate Questionnaire & Responses

Members of the RoxVote Coalition contacted all of the preliminary candidates running for the District 7 City Council seat to see what they would do about several issues facing the community. Each candidate received the same questionnaire and was instructed to limit their responses to two pages each. Enclosed are the unedited answers from the two finalists – Tito Jackson and Sheneal Parker – in response to our questions about city services & information sharing, housing, youth opportunities, public safety, education, and jobs. Their replies are also available at **www.RoxVote.org**, along with additional resources about how to participate in the special election.

What does a City Councilor do? In order to help voters make an informed choice about who will next represent them on the City Council, the RoxVote Coalition wanted to provide some information about a district City Councilor's role and responsibilities.

The Boston City Council serves as the link between the citizens of Boston and their municipal government. Through filing legislation, enacting orders, ordinances, and resolutions, and making decisions about the city funding, the Council actively represents the diverse interests of Bostonians while ensuring the efficient and cost effective delivery of services. City Councilors are tasked with approving the city's budget, holding hearings on issues of concerns to the community, providing constituent services, connecting residents to resources, attending community events, and representing the concerns of the district to the rest of the Council and to other branches and offices of city, state, and federal government. Issues that City Council committees address include Economic Development & Planning, Education, Environment & Health, Housing, Labor, Youth Affairs & Human Rights, and Public Safety.

GET INVOLVED! *You can also help us* ***"Get Out the Vote"*** *by reminding your family, friends, a*

GET OUT THE VOTE!

neighbors to go out to the polls. Please contact us at 617.849.6321 or shasib@madison-park.org if you can help distribute voter information, canvass voters or phone calls to voters as we approach Election Day. We will be hosted by Madison Park Development Corporation during weekday late-afternoons/evenings and on Saturday mornings, along with November 5th, 7th, and 8th (General Election). ***Please join us!***

Find your polling location at www.WhereDoIVoteMA.com
and additional resources at www.RoxVote.org.

RoxVote Coalition: DISTRICT 7 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

TITO JACKSON

1. What are the first three action steps you would take during your first month in office?

- Invest in small business infrastructure
- Launch the Roxbury Reads program for elementary school students.
- Initiate a public art campaign.

2. HOUSING If elected as City Councilor, what will you do to reduce and/or address homelessness and foreclosures in District 7?

Boston has made great strides in coordinating services to help place homeless individuals in permanent housing. As a board member for Housing First, I believe we need to deal with the ever-growing homeless family population. No one deserves to live on the street or in crowded shelters. By tackling this issue, in turn, it will help combat the rise in homeless students.

3. YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES With a decrease in funding for youth jobs, community centers, and after-school programming, what proposals would you put forward so that opportunities for District 7's youth are increased?

Since taking office this past March, one of my objectives has been to create opportunities for young people in District 7 by building partnerships between the youth and a spectrum of organizations. My office hired thirteen interns from across the city for a two month program dedicated to building leadership skills in the four sectors of organizing: Communications (media, etc.), Development (finance), Political (inter-organizational relationships), and Field (grassroots organizing, etc.).

4. PUBLIC SAFETY What does effective community policing mean to you?

Community policing is a cooperative effort. Get to know the police officers who patrol your neighborhood. Speak to your neighbors. Neighborhood association and crime watch meetings are a great forum for identifying common nuisances or hazardous conditions. Call the cops when you see illegal activity, and call your city councillor's office in response to disruptions in basic city services. As residents, we need to take a common sense approach when it comes to combating crime and violence in our community. I live on Schuyler Street. As long I am there, there will never be a Schuyler Street gang. There are things all of us can do to improve our neighborhood.

5. EDUCATION In light of recent school closings and BPS budget cuts, what will you do to ensure that students in the district receive quality education?

Our primary focus at the high school level is on a vocational/technical curriculum which will graduate students who are job-ready and better-equipped to enter the professional class: life sciences, engineering and architecture. Despite budget cuts, we have to continue to provide enrichment for all grades. This means forming public-private partnerships.

6. JOBS What steps will you take to make sure that District 7 residents have equal access to jobs in government agencies, trade unions and large institutions?

Trade unions need new members to thrive and District 7 residents need jobs, but the pipeline connecting the two isn't in place yet. Setting aside a certain number of work hours for apprentices on construction sites can help ease the way for new membership. Roxbury Community College will become a conduit to green

jobs, the healthcare sector and other large institutions. Job training and placement programs are a critical piece of the fair access equation.

7. **<u>DEVELOPMENT</u> With major developments moving forward in Dudley Square, including the Ferdinand building and several publicly owned parcel lots, what steps would you take to ensure that these developments benefit the community and contribute to the revitalization of Dudley Square?**

   A vigorous community process will ensure that developers and the community agree on benefits. Obviously, the primary benefit to Roxbury residents will be construction and permanent jobs. The workforce on a project should absolutely mirror the community abutting it. Unions, community members, contractors and project owners have to work in concert to make that happen. I will facilitate that conversation. During planning stages, diversity consultants are one way to improve local and M/WBE hires on large projects. Once construction begins, mandating the prevailing wage on open shop projects will also ensure that more residents have access to decent paying job opportunities. A good faith effort to meet the Boston Resident Job Policy matters on every development project in the City of Boston, but the revitalization of Dudley Square is another chance to prove that the BRJP numbers are easily exceeded.

RoxVote Coalition: DISTRICT 7 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

SHENEAL PARKER

1. What are the first three action steps you would take during your first month in office?

- Hire staff who are highly-talented & experienced in constituent services and community organizing, in order to provide the level of constituent services that Councilor Turner's office was renowned for.
- Kick-off an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) initiative by conducting an "asset-map" of the District. As a community and your Councilor, we need to know the talents and resources in our community that we can turn to to get things done. We need to spread the "ABCD principles" - that organizations like DSNI have used so successfully - across the District.
- I'm spending every day talking to residents across District 7 and will continue to do so through the Preliminary Election on September 27 to the General election on November 8. From those conversations, I will develop my third and many more actions steps for my first 30 days.

2. HOUSING If elected as City Councilor, what will you do to reduce and/or address homelessness and foreclosures in District 7?

I will draw upon my extensive work in the affordable housing movement. I will connect residents with the successful programs at the city's Department of Neighborhood Development. I believe in what works, regardless of who created it.

3. YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES With a decrease in funding for youth jobs, community centers, and after-school programming, what proposals would you put forward so that opportunities for District 7's youth are increased?

We have a wealth of great youth development programs in D7, from some of the city-run, to non-profits and community organizations, to the faith-based ones, to the grassroots/activist initiatives. Organizations across D7 have indeed suffered funding cutbacks, and the cuts in youth jobs funding were unacceptable.

That said, it is our responsibility to young people to provide the services they want and need, in the most efficient manner possible. That means we have to ask tough questions of ourselves as adults. There is too much duplication at the management level in these organizations – for example, do we need to have similar, yet competing organizations, each with their own Executive Director, separate insurance, separate payroll assistants, and so on? I believe it makes more sense to expand a measurably-successful program by 50% rather than create another one.

And, while I don't endorse the city's recent closing of community centers I do think it is unacceptable to pay adults to sit at a desk in a grossly under-utilized building. In fact, it was realities like that one that gave the Mayor the ammunition to close those centers, rather than demanding they do outreach & increase their membership.

Further, we must do more than pay lip service to the elephants-in-the-room: fatherlessness and dysfunctional families. If we continue to depend almost exclusively on funding and on programs that act as surrogate fathers & families, we will always be fighting an uphill battle to say afloat and will never create true self-sufficiency and empowerment in the community. We must create tangible ways to reconnect fathers and their children, including addressing the social, financial and legal barriers that often block their connection.

4. PUBLIC SAFETY What does effective community policing mean to you?

Effective community policing creates dramatic and measurable reductions in violence, homicide, personal crimes, property crimes and quality of life issues, not just changes in perceptions.

Officers, detectives and command staff who are assigned to the community; who develop relationships with the community; who are responsive and respectful of the community; and who build trust with the community. Conversely, as these relationships are built, the community will and should become more responsive to; more respectful of; and more trusting of law enforcement.

We must do our best to eliminate the cycle of distrust that occurs in so many urban communities where residents see law enforcement as an occupying force and law enforcement views residents as uncooperative, uncaring or hostile. That cycle can only be broken through genuine respect and trust. "Respect" includes the ability to criticize each other, not as an "attack" but from the spirit of trying to achieve shared goals. For example, the partnerships in the "Boston Miracle" started with the simple agreement between largely-white law enforcement and the black community that both sides wanted to stop youth homicide, even though both sides disagreed on many things and had laundry lists of past grievances.

5. **<u>EDUCATION</u> In light of recent school closings and BPS budget cuts, what will you do to ensure that students in the district receive quality education?**

One thing I'll do is regularly request and demand data from BPS that measures quality, equality and outcomes; and attempt to make the reporting of such data part of BPS policy rather than via ad-hoc "requests." This is data beyond MCAS scores and graduation rates. For example, at a recent School Committee meeting, Rev. Groover asked Superintendent Johnson for data about where the students from the closing schools ended up. How many got their first choice? Second choice? How many were "administratively-assigned?" Further, if BPS fails to make such data and reports widely available, my staff will post it on the web and in my office's community literature/newsletter.

6. **<u>JOBS</u> What steps will you take to make sure that District 7 residents have equal access to jobs in government agencies, trade unions and large institutions?**

The first step will be to assess what those entities are currently doing to recruit D7 residents and maintain a diverse and local workforce. Often, these entities do in fact declare commitment to equal access but then offer a series of reasons as to why the results don't match the rhetoric. If for example, the institution says they did not get enough applicants or qualified applicants, we must respond to their challenge by delivering a pool of applicants. Beyond my experience with institutions like Wentworth and Northeastern, my advisors include individuals with extensive urban workforce development experience.
Secondly, similar to my position on BPS data, I will make the data about those jobs & how those entities perform as public as possible, whether via new policy or through my office's own publication of it.

7. **<u>DEVELOPMENT</u> With major developments moving forward in Dudley Square, including the Ferdinand building and several publicly owned parcel lots, what steps would you take to ensure that these developments benefit the community and contribute to the revitalization of Dudley Square?**

One key step is to require the developer(s) to hire a community liaison for each project. The liaison will not only provide the community with a single source of information on compliance and accountability with the Boston Residents Jobs Policy and promised community benefits; but will also perform critical outreach to community residents and organizations. For example, it is not sufficient to simply announce the availability of jobs for local residents; it is critical to have someone recruiting and walking residents through the process.

I have a track record: as a member of Wentworth Institute of Technology's Community Task Force I helped get Wentworth's commitment to give hiring priority in construction projects to Boston residents, particularly those from adjacent neighborhoods, and to hire a liaison to monitor application of the new policy.