



2013 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CANDIDATES FOR BOROUGH PRESIDENT

Citizens Union would appreciate your response to the following questions related to policy issues facing the City of New York that are of concern to Citizens Union and residents of the City. We plan to make public your responses to this questionnaire in our Voters Directory, on our website, and in other appropriate venues. Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union will use to evaluate candidates who are running for office in order to determine our "Preferred Candidates" for the primary election and "Endorsed Candidates" for the general election.

If you seek our support, we would also need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process. We will not automatically schedule an interview with you if you return this questionnaire, as we prioritize competitive races and resources constrain us from evaluating all races. Please contact us if you wish to be interviewed. We thank you very much for your response.

Candidate Name: Melinda Katz _____ Age: 47 _____

Campaign Address: 116-16 Queens Blvd. Ste. 255; Forest Hills, NY 11375 _____

Campaign Telephone Number: (718) 480-6656 _____ Fax: N/A

Party Affiliation(s): Dem, WFP _____ Campaign Manager Name: Brian Fritsch _____

Website & Email: www.melindakatz.com; melinda@melindakatz.com _____

Education: J.D., St. John's University School of Law; B.A., University of Mass., Hillcrest High School _____

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): Attorney (formerly of Greenberg Traurig) _____

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: New York City Council Member (2002-2009); Director of Community Boards, Queens Borough President's Office (1999-2002); New York State Assembly Member (1994-1998); Attorney, Weil Gotshal & Manges, former Board Member, Queens Symphony Orchestra; former Board Member, Queens Jewish Community Council;

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES

(Please note: Citizens Union can only grant its support to candidates we have interviewed. If you would like to be interviewed, please follow up with Citizens Union staff, as resources constrain us from interviewing every candidate.)

Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings? YES

Signature of Candidate: _____

Date: _____

Please state your position on the following issues by indicating whether you support or oppose each, where applicable. Please also use the space provided below each question or on a separate sheet of paper to elaborate on your positions on the questions which require a detailed answer. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

1. What is your position on changing the current land use process under the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) to require that community-based 197-a plans are responded to when other development proceeds in conflict with those plans?	Support
2. Do you support ending mid-year amendments to the Annual Citywide Statement of Needs and including other than city-owned property in the Atlas of City Owned Property so a more comprehensive picture of services, facilities, and environmental burdens is known to inform future development?	Support
3. What is your position on designating urban planners for use by community boards and requiring borough presidents to report to the Council the manner in which they advertise and make community board appointments? (Int. No. 913)	Support
4. What is your position on establishing a formal, standardized and transparent process for community board appointments including written applications, interviews of candidates, and filling vacancies within 30 days?	Support
5. What is your position on independent budgeting for the following:	
a. the borough presidents	Support
b. the Conflicts of Interest Board	Support
c. the public advocate	Support
d. community boards	Support
6. Do you support standardizing term limits to five consecutive two-year terms for members of all community boards?	Support
7. If elected, would you post on your website all applications received by your office for capital and expense discretionary funds, as well as groups which ultimately received funding?	Support
8. Do you support empowering borough presidents to require the appearance of borough commissioner of city agencies for monthly interagency meetings led by the borough presidents?	Support

9. What is your position on granting the borough presidents the ability to make an additional appointment to the Board of Standards and Appeals?	Support
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Additional Comments: In general, I believe that the Borough President's office, as well as the myriad of government agencies that serve our city, would greatly benefit from greater transparency. We must find ways to restore public trust on the issues mentioned above and a range of other issues.

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1. How would you use the office of the borough president to impact city policies affecting the borough?

Queens has many serious issues including a need for more quality jobs, improved education and healthcare, better public transportation options, and a need to rebuild Southern Queens after Sandy.

The Queens Borough President has important powers to work on these issues, especially in terms of the land use review process and the capital budget. My experience as the Land Use Chair on the City Council, I was a proponent of environmentally conscious growth that preserves the character of the communities that make Queens the best place in New York to live.

I believe that the steps I've outlined in my Economic development plan are a road map to making improvement on many of these issues. Please click here to download it:

<http://melindakatz.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Melinda-Katz-Economic-Development-Plan.pdf>

On another level, the office is also an important unifier, who must work with elected officials, community boards and citizens to create a vision for the borough that combines all

perspectives. This is especially critical in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy; when so many communities are in desperate need of comprehensive emergency plans, permanent storm protection measures, and significant upgrades to the sewer systems.

2. Developers argue ULURP should be streamlined while community groups and advocates believe more opportunities for input should be provided or that voting thresholds should be changed for application approval. Others note that the ULURP process does not integrate the need to plan for post 9/11 security issues in development. What reforms to ULURP do you support?

The response (or lack there of) to Hurricane Sandy highlighted the lack of preparation and some of the other shortcomings of the ULURP process. The number one priority of the Borough President on land use is to ensure that we have a unified vision for the borough, and that the infrastructure is in place for each community. That should include adding evacuation plans and other contingency plans for every community.

I'm also open to making sure that community input is more than just listened to, but actually acted upon. We need to make sure that we are doing more than just paying lip service to our community boards and civic groups.

3. The borough presidents make recommendations to the mayor on capital projects as part of the budget process. All of the boroughs combined additionally receive 5 percent of the appropriations in the mayor's capital budget divided between the boroughs based on formulas related to land size and population. What would be your priorities for capital projects in the borough?

My top priority for the capital budget would include funding for rebuilding the Rockaways, and modernizing and improving the sewer system across the borough, which constantly floods homes. Funding for overcrowded and struggling schools as well as our libraries are also key to educating our children and even many adults. Additionally, I believe that allocating funding to our park improvements and upkeep, senior centers, and our cultural institutions are also important to improving the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Also important to Queens specifically is that we actually get our fair share of the capital budget. We currently rank tied for last in per capita funding for the Borough

President's office and dead last in per capita library funding, and per capita cultural program funding. This situation needs to change and I will fight to make sure that Queens plays second fiddle to no one.

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4. Borough presidents are charged with establishing a planning office that, among other functions, provides training and technical assistance to community boards on land use issues. How would you use the office to help community boards fulfill their charter mandated responsibilities in providing feedback on land use proposals while enabling the boards to make decisions independent of the borough president's office?

My office will be proud to provide sound technical and planning assistance to the community board. I will instruct them, however, that their primary role is to educate, not dictate, policy to them.

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5. Borough presidents are charged with making hundreds of appointments. What criteria would you use for appointments to positions appointed by the borough president (the Panel on Educational Policy, City Planning Commission, community boards, etc.)? What processes would you put in place for advertising open positions and recruiting qualified candidates that represent the diversity of New York City?

I believe that appointments must reflect the make up of the communities they represent. That means there must be a strong mix of cultural and ideological backgrounds for every neighborhood and every community in that neighborhood must be represented. My PEP appointment, for example, will represent educators and parents who are most strongly invested in the community. I pledge to be transparent and pro-active in recruiting the best candidates for my appointments possible.

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6. Borough presidents can hold hearings on any matter of public interest and are charged with establishing a borough-wide complaint program to report public complaints to better service delivery by agencies. How would you use these powers and the position of the office to amplify the concerns of borough residents? What issues might you focus on to improve agency performance or draw public attention to?

There is a wide range of issues that I could potentially raise throughout the borough. Undoubtedly, there will be many fights that I look forward to having. Some points, however,

like those mentioned in my campaign pledges, are already clear to me, and I look forward to using my bully pulpit on those issues.

7. The borough presidents have the authority to introduce legislation yet few borough presidents in recent years have exercised this authority. Would you utilize this power, and, if so, what legislation would you introduce?

I would be willing and open to using this power if there was a need that was not being addressed properly.

8. How would you leverage the office of Borough President to address any of the following issues, if not discussed in answering previous questions:
- a. Affordable Housing
 - b. Public Safety
 - c. Public Transportation
 - d. Health and the Environment
 - e. Economic Development
 - f. Education

a. Large swaths of Queens are rapidly changing and quickly becoming unaffordable to the people that live there. The dream of owning a home, once far more real in Queens than other parts of New York City, is now only for the privileged few. I believe, however, that throughout my years as the New York City Council's Land Use Chair I was highly successful in incorporating large amounts of affordable housing in new developments across the city. I want to bring that experience to the Borough President's office where I can continue to fight for lower and middle-income residents. We need to plan for the future by looking ahead at expiring affordable housing agreements and making new plans for those families, while still fighting for as much affordable housing as possible from new developments. We should also work to downzone additional communities to protect their character as I have done in many neighborhoods already.

b. We cannot have a government that allows the kind of gun violence that plagues our community. We must address this disease now. Although crime and incarceration rates are falling throughout the city, there has been a steady erosion of trust between NYPD and our minority communities, which affects the quality of life in our neighborhoods. We must find the correct balance. I will push with the new Mayoral administration for complete reform of stop and frisk. I do not believe that it should be abolished, but any other inefficient government program, that was totally wrong 90% of the time, and not retrieving guns 99.9% of the time would be

overhauled, and the same thing should happen with stop and frisk. There must be clear direction from the top down. I also believe that we should return to community policing and refocus attention on innovative solutions, like gun buy back programs, more school programs that keep schools open later, and post-high school programs that offer career focused alternatives for our youth.

C. Transportation in Queens is an incredibly challenging issue. While some neighborhoods such as Astoria and Jackson Heights are very densely populated and well suited for public transport, other communities, such as College Point, Rosedale and Floral Park, are some of the least densely populated neighborhoods in the city and make efficient public transport very difficult. A borough as diverse as Queens requires a thoughtful transportation system that is just as diverse as it's neighborhoods. I believe we should establish Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems, especially serving areas without adequate mass transit service, particularly Eastern and Southern Queens. We should also require thorough public review and input on BRT routing, stations and stops and the impact on commercial and residential districts. I would also like to work with the NYCEDC to preserve ferry service to the Rockaways and expand ferry service to Astoria and Roosevelt Island to allow for a quick connection between those neighborhoods. Finally, we should follow through on improvements and modernization of the 7 train, to increase capacity and speed of travel.

d. Queens has been facing a healthcare crisis for many years. With only nine hospitals left in the borough we have a very limited number of options in Queens. Our borough has the lowest number of hospital beds of any borough at less than 1.7 per resident. That marks a drop of nearly one third in the last half decade. Additionally emergency room patients often see waits of nearly eighteen hours before they find an available bed. These numbers are unacceptable and require immediate attention. I fought Mayor Giuliani tooth and nail to stop him from privatizing our public hospitals in the 1990s, and I won. Additionally, nutrition problems and a lack focus on preventative care are also significant problems that the next Borough President must help address.

e. As outlined in my Economic Development Plan for Queens, I believe in comprehensive solutions to development that protect existing residents, account for necessary infrastructure improvements, and include strong affordable housing and small business opportunities. With my experience as Chair of the City Council's Land Use Committee for eight years, I know how to use the rezoning process as a driver for local economies. I will not, however, sacrifice short-term profits at the expense of forward-thinking, sustainable development. In my experience, however, these two points are not at odds with one another and I believe that we can attract the types of new businesses to Queens that also want to be a good neighbor to their community.

f. As a graduate of Queens Public Schools I have a strong desire to see our public schools succeed and thrive. Yet there are numerous challenges and obstacles preventing our system from achieving their goals. Less than a quarter of NYC public school graduates are prepared for college, and our readiness in science and

mathematics is even lower. We need to find ways to keep our borough's parents and students more engaged in their school life, and lower commute times so that students can spend more energy actually learning. As Borough President I will establish an education war-room that consistently tracks and identifies issues with specific schools and coordinates action plans to fight unnecessary co-locations and school closures.

Additional Comments:



CANDIDATE ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Citizens Union is adding a new element to its evaluation of candidates running for office. As a candidate who presently does not hold elected office, CU is interested in knowing your top five campaign promises you are making to the voters during this campaign for this position.

If elected, Citizens Union will use these promises to evaluate your performance while in office, as well as, to evaluate your candidacy in the future.

We thank you very much for your response. Please feel free to use additional paper if the space provided is not sufficient.

TOP FIVE 2013 CAMPAIGN PROMISES

1. I will work tirelessly to protect the Rockaways and fight for their long-term economic vitality and protection. _____
2. I will address the sewer problems that are plaguing much of Queens and flooding numerous homes. _____
3. I will champion affordable housing in this borough and ensure that large amounts of affordable housing are included in new developments. _____

4. I will have a education war-room that will successfully fight unnecessary co-locations, school closures and budget cuts. ____
5. I will use the land use process to help create emergency beds in the borough and address our current shortfall. _____

Please return to: Citizens Union, Local Candidates Committee
via fax to 212.227.0345 or via email to candidates@citizensunion.org
Call 212-227-0342 Rachael Fauss ext. 22 or Alex Camarda ext. 24 with any questions.