



**2013 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR
CANDIDATES FOR CITY COUNCIL**

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: Helen K. Rosenthal

Age: 52

Campaign Address: 225 West 83rd Street-Apt. 4K, New York, NY 10024

Campaign Telephone Number: (917) 923-1019

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat

Campaign Manager Name: Ahmed Tigani

Facebook: Helen Rosenthal for City Council

Website: www.helenrosenthal.com

E-mail: rosenthal.helen@gmail.com

Education: BA, Michigan State University (1982)

Masters Degree in Public Health (with Distinction), Yale School Medicine (1987)

Citizens Union
2013 City Council Questionnaire

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Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): Chair of the Board (unpaid), ParentJobNet (not-for-profit organization which helps public school parents find jobs). (2010-present)

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

Community Board 7 (Upper West Side, Manhattan): Member, 2001-present; Board Chair, 2007-2009.

New York City Office of Management and Budget, 1988-1996.

Assistant Director, responsible for overseeing New York City's health care budgets

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: Helen Rosenthal

Date: July 15, 2013

I. CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Please state your position on the following issues by indicating whether you support or oppose each. You may elaborate in the space provided at the end or on additional paper.

VOTING AND ELECTIONS REFORM

1. What is your position with respect to eliminating party primaries and establishing a non-partisan election system in which all candidates and all voters participate in the first round and the top two candidates advance to the second round?	Support
2. What is your position on instituting Instant Runoff Voting for all citywide offices and for all special elections for city offices? (Int. No. 1066)	Support
3. What is your position on creating a voluntary municipal poll worker program to supplement poll worker recruitment by district leaders? (Int. No. 721)	Support
4. What is your position on requiring city agencies to report the number of applicants that they register to vote as required by current law (Int. No. 760)?	Support
5. What is your position on transmitting electronically voter registration information collected by city agencies to the Board of Elections in the City of New York?	Support
6. What is your position on requiring the Board of Elections to report performance metrics to the City Council that conform to the Mayor's Management Report? (Int. No. 778)	Support
7. What is your position on modifying the City Charter to require that laws enacted by referendum only be changed through approval by the voters?	Support
8. What is your position on expanding the Voter Guide published by the Campaign Finance Board to cover all races occurring in New York City, such as state and federal contests, and providing the opportunity for voters to receive the guide electronically rather than in print form? (Int. No. 769)	Support

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

9. What is your position on eliminating matching funds for contributions bundled by lobbying organizations or lobbyists?	Support
10. What is your position on banning placement agents from bundling contributions for any elected official who influences the selection of pension investors?	Support
11. What is your position on prohibiting participants in the city's campaign finance program from using public matching funds to purchase strategic campaign consulting services from firms that also provide lobbying services?	Support

CITY COUNCIL REFORM

12. What is your position on creating a bill drafting service independent of the Speaker's Office, similar to the New York State Legislature's bill drafting commission?	Support
13. What is your position on the following proposals enabling Council committees to function more effectively and independently of the speaker :	
a. Should committee chairs have the ability to hire at least one committee staffer?	Support
b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs?	Support
c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members?	Support
d. Should the number of overall committees be reduced so members can participate more meaningfully in fewer issues?	Support
14. What is your position on greater disclosure of councilmembers' outside income?	Support
15. What is your position on limiting stipends or "lulus" to only members holding majority or minority leadership positions?	Support
16. When the Quadrennial Compensation Commission is reconvened, what is your position on requiring that any future increase in councilmember compensation only apply prospectively to the following term?	Support

17. What is your position on ensuring a more equitable and needs-based distribution of discretionary funding?	Support
18. What is your position on increasing transparency of discretionary funding by requiring the list of capital and expense funds and their sponsors be provided to councilmembers and the public three days in advance of any vote, and expanding the online searchable database of expense funds to include all capital fund recipients and applicants?	Support

PUBLIC SAFETY AND OVERSIGHT OF POLICE MISCONDUCT

19. What is your position on reducing the frequency of stop, question and frisks by conducting stops more judiciously?	Support
20. What is your position on establishing the Commission to Combat Police Corruption (CCPC) as a permanent commission in the City Charter while empowering the CCPC to issue subpoenas?	Support
21. What is your position on enhancing the Civilian Complaint Review Board's (CCRB) authority to initiate an investigation into reported or known incidents of police misconduct without receipt of a formal complaint?	Support
22. What is your position on granting the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) with the authority to prosecute officers found guilty of lying during CCRB investigations?	Support
23. What is your position on reinstating the zero tolerance penalty for false official statements by public officers?	Support

BUDGET REFORM

24. What is your position on establishing independent budgeting for:	Support
a. the borough presidents?	
b. Conflicts of Interest Board?	Support
c. the public advocate ?	Support
d. community boards?	Support
25. What is your position on making the budget process more transparent by clearly defining units of appropriation and limiting their size?	Support

26. What is your position on release of revenue projections (other than property taxes) prior to Council hearings on the Executive budget?	Support
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LAND USE AND COMMUNITY BOARD REFORM

27. What is your position on designating urban planners for use by community boards and requiring borough presidents report to the Council the manner in which they advertise and make community board appointments? (Int. No. 913)	Support
28. 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

Additional Comments:

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to provide some additional comments.

VOTING AND ELECTIONS REFORM

The voluntary municipal poll worker program (Int. No. 721) would have a meaningful impact on the UWS and I fully support it. Over the past month, during the petitioning process, I have met a number of people who have told me that their District Leader, who normally appoints them to the poll worker position, no longer supports them and they are therefore out of a job. All of these people are seniors on a fixed income who are perfectly capable of serving as poll workers, but have angered their local District Leader.

Over the years, on election days, I have often served as a poll watcher and met many well-educated individuals who help poll workers keep the lines moving along. These individuals tell me that they would like to serve as a poll worker, but don't know how to get involved. Int. No. 721 would help increase access to those interested in being a poll worker.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

See below: Campaign Priorities, number 1.

CITY COUNCIL REFORM

While I am in favor of reducing the overall number of committees so that Members can more meaningfully participate in fewer issues, I'm also open to the idea of forming two new special committees: one focused on climate change and preparedness; and a second focused on reducing income inequality in New York City. Superstorm Sandy and its aftermath have demonstrated the immediacy and saliency of climate change for New York. I, for the most part, support Mayor Bloomberg's \$20 billion plan (announced June 11th) for superstorm preparedness. Further, income inequality has increased substantially in New York since 2008, to levels not seen since before the Great Society-era programs—a trend which continues to accelerate and which (like climate change) will need a coordinated and sustained effort to reverse.

I believe that the tradition of discretionary funds distributed to individual councilmembers should continue. However, after the allocation of an equal base amount to each district, the methodology for allocating additional discretionary funds to each councilmember should be according to a statistically calculated formula that demonstrates the degree of economic need in each community—not an amount arbitrarily decided by the Speaker's Office.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND OVERSIGHT OF POLICE MISCONDUCT

I'm against "stop and frisk" in its current form, which is dependent on racial profiling. Instead, if there are specific communities where the City believes there are "at risk" individuals, it should increase access to intervention programs and alternatives to incarceration.

I support and laud City Council's recent passage of the Community Safety Act (Intro 1079, creating an independent inspector general to monitor and review police policy; and Intro 1980, which expands the definition of bias-based profiling and enables individuals to sue the Police Department in state court not only for individual instances of bias, but also for policies which disproportionately affect people in protected categories without serving a significant law enforcement goal). If elected to City Council, I'll work to further expand the definition of bias-based profiling to include immigrants, undocumented persons, and non-native English speakers.

BUDGET REFORM

Participatory Budgeting: As an active participant in the Participatory Budgeting Project NYC since its inception (I now sit on the Participatory Budgeting Project Board), I am a strong believer in the transparency and the accountability that comes with spending decisions at the neighborhood level. I favor expanding this pilot program to all 51 Council Districts and believe it is eminently reasonable that an amount equal to \$2.50 per resident

(approximately \$17.5 million per Council District) be spent in this way, in more direct accordance with the needs and wishes of local communities.

I have two additional concerns about the budget that revolve around the relationship between and authority of the Mayor's Office and the City Council:

Budget Dance: Every year the Mayor's Executive Budget cuts about \$350-\$400 million in social service programs and cultural institutions (0.5% of the total budget for NYC). Program representatives and citizens then spend countless hours lobbying the city council to restore funding, which ultimately happens for 85-90% of the programs. Needless to write, many are left feeling cynical about the budget process. Many also, perversely, feel good about getting back at least most of the program funding, when no program funding should have been cut in the first place. Furthermore, precious time and energy is wasted, time that could be better used discussing jobs and stimulating economic growth.

Baseline Funding: Currently, City Council restorations and funding apply only to one fiscal year, thus perpetuating the need for the budget dance. I believe that there is room in the City Charter for the City Council to issue a four-year plan that reflects baseline funding for programs and services.

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY BOARD REFORM

Land Use Reform: In addition to the positions stated above, I believe we need to modify the zoning variances for residential developments to include any new buildings over a certain size (e.g. ten apartments). ULURP review must be required to ensure that 30-50% of housing is affordable and on-site (split between low- and middle-income apartments). The ULURP review also gives communities an opportunity to request additional infrastructure where needed, such as parks and schools. Similarly, commercial developers should be required to commit 30-50% of new space to locally owned businesses in all new commercial developments.

Community Board Reform: I believe one half of future Community Board members should be chosen through direct, non-partisan elections (the other half through a more transparent and standardized version of the current City Council Member/Borough President selection process). As a current City Council candidate, I can attest that there is a special type and depth of learning that comes through active campaigning and asking people for their vote, and that the Community Board—and the community at large—would benefit from accessing this knowledge through democratically-elected Members. Council Members and Borough Presidents can use their appointment powers to fill the other half of the community board with local residents who possess expertise and technical knowledge of issues vital to the community—such as urban planning, land use, environmental sustainability—but who may lack the temperament or personality to join the Board through a political campaign.

II. 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/PRIORITIES

1. Campaign Finance Reform

I favor—and if elected, will sponsor legislation to achieve—a fully publically-financed campaign system for New York City elections. My advocacy in this area was first publicly visible in 2009 through a piece I wrote for The Nation magazine, calling for a major league baseball-style “luxury tax” to offset the advantages held by ultra-wealthy, self-funded candidates who choose to opt-out of the City’s campaign finance system and guidelines.

My proposal will enable candidates for City Council, Borough President and City-wide office (Public Advocate, Comptroller, Mayor) to receive public funding up to the maximum allowable spending limits (currently in place) once they have obtained sufficient petition signatures to get on the ballot and have collected the pre-defined number of small dollar donations—say, \$20—to demonstrate a meaningful level of grass roots support.

The threshold number of contributors would be: for City Council, 250; for Borough President, 1,000; for City-wide office, 2,500. Under this system, a grassroots candidate for City Council could receive full public funding while raising as little as \$5,000 from individual donors and a grass roots candidate for city-wide office raising as little as \$50,000 would also be fully funded. Contributions from Political Action Committees and those “doing business with the City” would not be permitted.

A baseball-style luxury tax would apply to candidates who opt out of this system and exceed spending guidelines, with subsidies paid to candidates who stay within the guidelines—thus leveling the financial playing field in campaigns.

In addition, we need to dissect and make transparent the current reporting of Advance Repayments to specify what the repayments are for. Many times they are likely for small office supplies. However, in reviewing the details of some campaign expenditures, Advance Repayments to candidates can reach up to the tens of thousands of dollars.

2. Local WPA

To combat persistent joblessness, income inequality, and the City's over-reliance on financial services as a source of jobs and tax revenues, I favor and will introduce legislation to establish a Local WPA, modeled after the most ambitious and successful Agency of FDR's New Deal. This Local WPA will provide seed capital and loan guarantees to start-ups and small businesses in technology, health care, light manufacturing and emerging environmental and "green" industries—as well as locally owned and operated businesses. The goal will be to create sustainable sources of new, well-paying jobs that can support middle-class families.

The template for a Local WPA will be an expanded version of the Primary Care Development Corporation (PCDC), which I helped establish during my tenure as Assistant Director of the New York City Office of Management and Budget during the early 1990s. Leveraging a small amount of City dollars, and combining this seed capital with private foundation funds and proceeds from public bond issues, the PCDC ultimately established and/or refurbished 90 primary care facilities in underserved communities throughout New York State, and in the process created 2,300 sustainable, well-paying jobs. This program, still thriving after two decades, has stood the test of time and could be rolled out on a wider scale, and encompass industries beyond health care.

3. Affordable Housing

Since City Council's passage of the Vacancy Destabilization Act (1994), New York City lost over 400,000 affordable units; spiraling rents make New York City—even in relatively prosperous areas like the Upper West Side—a more challenging place for middle-class families to thrive and for their children to advance. The vast shrinkage of affordable housing units is a prime mover in the pervasive growth of inequality in New York.

I support—and if elected will work vigorously to enact—an affordable housing legislative package which contains the following elements:

- a. a repeal of the Vacancy Destabilization Act and restoration of Home Rule;
- b. an end to the use of City and State tax levies, principally through 421-a and J-51 programs, to subsidize market-rate and luxury apartments in economically robust areas (e.g. Manhattan below 125th Street and Park Slope). Market-rate housing should be promoted and sustained by the market itself. Proceeds saved by ending these subsidies should be re-directed to establishing a Mitchell-Lama program for the 21st century. Unlike the Mitchell-Lama program implemented in 1955, this one would guarantee affordable housing into perpetuity—both through its financing mechanism and by annually updating relevant income levels to ensure accessibility for moderate and middle income individuals;
- c. a closure of the "carried interest" tax loophole which enables firms organized as private equity companies, including developers, to have their income taxed at the lower capital gains rate—in many cases lower than what a teacher or social worker pays—as compared to the more appropriate earned income rate.

We should acknowledge that not everyone has—or will have—a deep interest in City budget matters. But we should also make things as easy as possible for those who do have an interest and guide them to understand the public policy implications of spending and spending patterns. Like many “academic” or “technical” topics, if spending can be explained in easily comprehensible terms, it can engage a wider audience.

5. Addressing School Overcrowding and Effectiveness

New York City’s public schools already suffer from overcrowding—and with the City’s population expected to grow by nearly 1 million residents within the next two decades, this problem will only increase unless directly and forcefully addressed. More resources alone cannot address overcrowding and effectiveness, but additional resources are essential to fixing these problems. Below are my goals with regard to education and my recommendations on how to pay for them:

Goals:

- Universal pre-K and after school programs.
- Classroom size limit set to the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) guidelines.
- Spanish language elective starting in Grade 1; Mandarin, Hindi, or Arabic elective starting in Grade 9.
- Laptop for every student starting in Grade 7.
- Expanded electives in computer programming, Microsoft Excel and related “job-oriented” skills starting in Grade 9.

Funding:

I favor a financial transactions tax—analogous to the one that has existed for years in Germany, Europe’s strongest economy—to pay for these education initiatives. The tax should focus, initially, on three areas: 1) securities bought on “margin” or with borrowed funds; 2) “short sales” of securities which are not owned but borrowed—which is done mostly for speculative purposes; and 3) financings such as “pre-paid forwards” whose principal motivation is tax deferral or avoidance. The boom in stock market prices and bank profits since 2009 is substantially the result of ultra-low interest rate policies pursued by the Federal Reserve; it seems both logical and fair to reclaim a portion of these government-engineered profits to pay for urgent public priorities.

**Please return to: Citizens Union, Local Candidates Committee
via fax to 212.227.0345 or via email to candidates@citizensunion.org
Call us at 212-227-0342 with any questions.**

Independent analysts estimate the City could save \$250-300 million by closing this loophole; proceeds could be directed to rental assistance and the Mitchell-Lama program for the 21st century (described above).

- d. the establishment of a continuous (24/7) and multi-lingual legal service hotline to protect tenants—in particular non-native English speakers—against predatory eviction and displacement tactics.

As an elected official, I will hire one tenant lawyer to work full-time in my District Office to provide free legal services to any individual (NYCHA, rent-regulated, Mitchell-Lama or any others) who is being harassed by their landlord.

4. Budget Transparency Workshops

As a former senior City budget official, I understand how arcane the budget process and spending decisions can seem to most New Yorkers. I also understand that the City's budget is a reflection of our City's policy decisions. Democratic input from our NYC residents is critical.

I applaud the successful efforts of the current City Comptroller in launching (Jan, 2013) the innovative website "Checkbook 2.0", which provides substantially expanded access into how New York City spends its over \$70 billion budget. This tool will become particularly valuable as the new Mayor and City Council are sworn in this coming January—and have just six months to close an estimated \$2 billion budget shortfall.

Thanks to "Checkbook 2.0", many vital tools to increase the public's understanding of the budget process are available. Checkbook 2.0 is easy to use and is set up in a way that encourages the public to explore what it has to offer—in particular as it relates to contracts approved by the City.

But as with so many technology-based tools, do enough people know how to use them—or are even aware of their existence—so that the budget actually becomes more transparent and the budget process more democratic?

For these reasons, among others, I propose – and if elected, will hold within the 6th District – a monthly series of "budget workshops," designed to teach people how to use "Checkbook 2.0" and understand its findings; access budget and finance analysis prepared by the Independent Budget Office; keep constituents up-to-date on the unfolding 2014 Budget process; and get "live" input from constituents on their spending priorities.

I see these "budget workshops" taking place at two levels. First, in a monthly presentation to and discussion with the Community Board, which includes some of the most engaged local citizens and whose meetings are open to the public; and second, through monthly "town hall" sessions entirely open to the public: part presentation and part "Q&A." As I have an extensive background in City budget matters and truly enjoy the work, I would enthusiastically organize and look forward to leading these sessions.