



City Councilor Survey Responses - Deb Crossley

1. Do you support the Mayor's "Booster Stabilization Fund"? What are its strengths and what should change?

Despite protestations from many councilors, the mayor's proposal was the only proposal on the table that would give more money to the schools. It would have given a steady stream of funds to the schools, as you know, by freeing up operating capital that otherwise would have had to go into paying off the pension obligation. And I understand that we still would have money in free cash for urgent repairs to school buildings. The mayor committed to that in her capital plan speech.

However - I understand the schools need funds NOW to address serious issues faced by a student population trying to recover emotionally and academically from the pandemic shutdown. I led and contributed to many events and outreach to champion the override, but it failed and that money was desperately needed. Our children are not recovered from the pandemic - really, none of us are. And we need support services to aid in a healthy transition. I am hopeful that a new a better plan will emerge that can address current and future needs. I will happily support any plan for more funds to fill these critical needs. And as I told Alison, I have asked for more funds to be on the table.

2. What do you view as the relationship between new development (housing, commercial) and the schools?

The primary driver of the high cost of living is housing, and we simply do not have enough smaller housing that could be reasonably affordable to young people wanting to bring their children to Newton Schools, or for teachers and staff needing to live within reasonable distance from their place of work. Our son is a chemistry teacher and coach at NSHS, and is back living with us after ten years on his own - so that he can afford to teach here. That is not sustainable for him - or for our schools. I Chair the Zoning & Planning committee where we are working hard to change the rules to allow more smaller dwellings in multifamily housing within and immediately surrounding our 12 village centers. This is a first essential step to increasing a diverse mix of housing options. Our demographic is getting older as young folks cannot afford to rent or own here - and school enrollments are steadily declining. We must open our doors wider to a new generation. Secondly, our overly strict rules and burdensome procedures have Newton as the fourth to lowest generator of new growth in Middlesex County. Under the arbitrary and absurd limit of proposition 2.5, new growth is the only way we can add appreciably to city revenue. We need housing, we need customers or our shops, we need village center activity. All that is stopping us from getting it is overly strict rules.

3. Please share your thoughts on the national teacher shortage, and how it impacts Newton's ability to attract and retain strong educators. Does a city councilor have a role? What is it?

We need to get salaries back up into the top 25% to remain reasonably competitive (I believe we are at 35%) AND we need to begin to solve the housing crisis - at least for

Newton. The combination of lowered salaries and sharp increases in the cost of living - again, driven by housing costs, make Newton prohibitive. I will work to support an override again, and I am working 24/7 to address the housing shortage in Newton.

4. Operating overrides help ensure the health of our schools. What is your plan for and role in ensuring successful overrides?

I worked very hard in support of the override. More hours than most. Unfortunately half the city council remained silent. And one worked actively against it, suggesting we should use one time funds to fill the gap. That was simply, wrong. I will never put politics ahead of what is right for our city. What I do not understand is why some parents voted against the override - as a parent who always supported overrides - this baffles me. We must try again - but need a much stronger and clearer campaign.

5. The current contract offers teachers a COLA of 2% or less. NPS Unit C employees report a non-living wage. Do you believe it is reasonable to expect the NTA to accept the current terms? How can you, as a city councilor, advocate for a fair contract?

I may not have a role in contract negotiations. We simply need more revenue sources and/or more overrides.