



## City Councilor Survey Responses - Rena Getz

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

*Newton has a unique opportunity to leverage tax overlay funds for public benefit use. I support wise utilization of these one-time funds, but after reviewing the Finance Committee (October 10, 2023) discussion on the matter, I concurred with the majority of the Finance Committee Councilors' vote to deny (3-5) the Mayor's Booster Stabilization Fund proposal. I appreciated Councilor Humphrey's assessment of the Mayor's proposal as too restrictive, with too long of a time period to tie up the funds (8 years), and the revenue generated is insufficient to fulfill current NPS needs. It is a disappointment, as I believe we need creative thinking around how best to immediately fund the NPS with the possible use of these one-time tax overlay funds (\$26M). Councilor Gentile recommended setting up a Reserve Fund, designated to support the operating and capital needs of the city budget while keeping these funds out of Free Cash. This plan would retain the flexibility of the use of these one-time funds. .*

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

*A significant portion of Newton's annual revenue comes from residential property taxes (84%). On the other hand, commercial properties have the potential to contribute tax revenue at a higher rate, but many commercial property sites throughout the city have been converted to residential property sites. The Village Center Overlay District does propose mixed use development in the VC2 and VC3 overlay districts, which eventually will provide revenue to the city. Housing in these developments, will bring families with school aged children to be educated in the NPS. We need to plan accordingly and be holistic about how we as a city plan for an increased NPS student population. Beyond accommodating an increase in student population in actual school facilities, we need to consider all of the other additional needs: academic programming, transport to schools, playing fields, etc.*

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?

*The national teacher shortage is a significant problem and one that I personally understand as my son is currently teaching locally here in the Boston area.*

*Part of a teacher retention plan would be to provide housing within the city of newton that is affordable to teachers, city staff and other city workers. Some of this housing will be provided through our Inclusionary Zoning. Depending on the size of a project, our Inclusionary Zoning will provide housing by requiring housing units to be provided at 110% AMI (Area Median Income) when a rental project is 21-99 units (2.5% of project*

total) and 100+ (5% of project total). For ownership projects inclusionary units are required in projects with 17-20 units (5%) - 21-99 units (7.5%) and 100+ (10%).

*Beyond providing housing that is affordable to a NPS employee, we need to support NPS staff by paying a living wage and keep pace with the increase in living costs. Rather than losing our experienced teachers to other municipalities, we need to value them and pay competitive wages.*

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

*It is important to instill a sense of communal investment in our future by investing in our children through the support of an Operating override going forward. Highly targeted and a fully defined scope will lead to the successful passage of a future override. Most people I speak with in the city support funding overrides for the schools, but the campaign needs to be fully transparent and the override scope completely defined and explained widely.*

**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 believe there needs to be quite a bit more transparency around the details of the teacher contract and the negotiations. No, this seems unreasonable. I would hope that all the parties would come to the table and negotiate in good faith, so that reasonable compromises would be reached. Having clarity and speaking with everyone involved is a start, the School Committee members, and the NTA members. As a city councilor, I believe it is important to establish working relationships with all of the parties involved so that frank conversation can be had and priorities understood.*