

Somerville Renters Forum 2021 - Housing Questionnaire

All candidates were asked the same questions. Questionnaires were submitted to the Somerville Renters Committee and CAAS on 8/6/21. The Ward candidates forum was held 8/11/21 on Zoom.

Candidate name: **Jesse Clingan**

Candidate email: jesseforward4@gmail.com

Position running for: **City Council Ward 4**

1. What do you view as the greatest challenge facing low income Somerville renters in 2021, and why?

The Green line extension and the rising rents it will bring. What I mean specifically is that gentrification of Somerville started in the late 90's. It really accelerated in the mid-2000's and hasn't stopped. This shift brought ever rising rents forcing many working class families out of the city. The green line could be the final nail in the coffin for lower income renters. The working class have always suffered from desires of the wealthy. With the trend of transit oriented urban living comes the trend of displacement of low income and working class families. The other part of the challenge that needs highlighting is the discrimination against lower income tenants, tenants with disabilities, and our aging population by property owners refusal to accept section 8 vouchers.

2. In a city where more than half of the people rent, what housing policies would you focus on to ensure that every resident has safe, stable, and affordable housing? We are particularly concerned that the elderly, people with disabilities, veterans, people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+, and other people with marginalized identities do not have enough access to housing in Somerville. If you are running for re-election, please share what you have already done on this issue and what you intend to prioritize next.

Incentivizing acceptance of section 8 vouchers, cracking down on discriminating landlords where provable hopefully making landlords think twice about practicing discriminatory practices against people with children, the elderly, people with disabilities, veterans, people of color, immigrants, and LGBTQ+ , I also support banning credit checks, sealing evictions, and capping the amount of up front costs that can be asked for (first/last/security/broker fee). The most important thing we can do is to build more fully accessible housing and requiring a percentage of units built by private developers to be fully accessible. As a councilor I brought the office of housing stability to fruition. I supported the transfer fee, the condo conversion Ordinance, a universal wait list, short term rental ordinance, tenants right to purchase, the tenant notification act, passed the zoning overhaul and then supported the affordable housing overlay, and I have supported bills on the state level such as the just cause eviction . I support the community land trust. I continue to support the eviction moratorium and I will continue to fight for rent control.

3. Far too many residents are still struggling to pay rent due to income loss during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those who worked in the service sector, gig economy, and undocumented

immigrants who might not qualify for traditional types of rental assistance. How would you support the recovery of residents in these situations so that they remain stably housed? If you are running for re-election, please share what you have already done on this issue and what you intend to prioritize next.

(No answer submitted.)

4. Affordable housing funding is critical, but limited. Public subsidy often builds homes that are still too expensive for the people struggling the most, with 1-bedroom rents over \$1500. How would you use zoning and other city-controlled tools for less expensive homes so that affordable housing funding can support the lowest-income residents of Somerville (at or below 30% of Area Median Income)? If you are running for re-election, please share what you have already done on this issue and what you intend to prioritize next.

(No answer submitted.)

5. How would you protect Somerville residents, particularly renters, from displacement due to rising rents, gentrification, and increased development? And how would you ensure that new developments give the allocated number of units to low income residents, as the oversight seems to be currently lacking? If you are running for re-election, please share what you have already done on this issue and what you intend to prioritize next.

(No answer submitted.)

6. The housing in Somerville that is available for low income residents -- including publicly owned, inclusionary and other types of subsidized, and privately owned -- is often full of bad conditions, and health and safety code violations. What would you do to ensure that all renters can live in safe and dignified housing in our city? If you are running for re-election, please share what you have already done on this issue and what you intend to prioritize next.

(No answer submitted.)

7. Low income residents often face unresponsive or hostile landlords and property management. Some tenants who are people of color or immigrants have experienced racism and other forms of discrimination. This means that even if residents can afford to live in Somerville, they do not feel welcome or embraced here. What would you do to ensure that all residents feel like they belong in our city, are empowered to uphold their rights as renters, and are protected from retaliation? If you are running for re-election, please share what you have already done on this issue and what you intend to prioritize next.

I helped create the office of housing stability. I support tenants' right to council. I would encourage the creation of tenants unions and make sure resources such as Cambridge Somerville legal services and caas are known to all renters. I would encourage more transparency in public housing. Perhaps having a liason present in any scheduled interaction

with residents in public housing.

8. How would you expand homeownership opportunities for first-time and low income residents in Somerville, especially for people of color, single parents, immigrants, veterans, and people with disabilities? If you are running for re-election, please share what you have already done on this issue and what you intend to prioritize next.

Community land trust, expand the 100 homes program.

9. As Mayor of Somerville, how would your administration collaborate with members of City Council to enact more housing justice policies?

As a City Councilor, how would you collaborate with your colleagues on Council and the new Mayoral administration to enact more housing justice policies?

If you are running for re-election, please share what you have already done to collaborate between both municipal branches and what you intend to prioritize next.

See answer to question 2.

10. What are the top 3 renter protections you would include in a Tenants' Bill of Rights and why? If you are running for re-election, please share what you have already done to enhance renter/tenant protections and what you intend to prioritize next.

(This question was inspired by Our Revolution Somerville's endorsement questionnaire)

See answer to question 2.