



Name: **Quaverly H. Rothenberg**

List the position (and ward, if applicable) for which you are running: **City councilor (Ward 3)**

***To schedule an interview, please attach your answers to these questions, save as a Word or Google document, and return to [Nykole.Roche@gmail.com](mailto:Nykole.Roche@gmail.com) by Friday, July 11, 2025.***

1. How do you understand your role as a Mayor/City Councilor/School Committee representative in view of assaults on public life?

I have always seen my role on the city council as a way to empower and enable the people of this city. Our democracy is always safer in the hands of the people, and so is our collective safety. I constantly help people on my own and coordinate what support I can, but my greater goal is to empower the residents of Northampton to form stronger mutual aid networks, legal aid networks, and to build out communication and alert systems across all types of media.

A step up from the people themselves are our public services such as Northampton Public Schools, the Fire Department, the Division of Community Care, our reverse-911 system, and future shelters. Under the current administration, city services are so severely underfunded that our fire department takes calls in other cities to make ends meet. My role as a city councilor is to direct our public money to public services and to make city government accountable to the people it serves, including oversight on how funds are being collected, saved, and spent. That way we can ensure our resources are supporting the entire community.

2. How do you envision your relationship with state legislators/legislature?

It's no secret that I stand up for my constituents, and I welcome all state reps to stand up with me. I've worked with Representative Sabadosa to advocate for tenants' rights, but I also notice that state legislators shied away from the fight for city-level school funding. The involvement of state officials is an important accountability feature for local government because we serve the same constituents. While we have different powers and responsibilities, I always welcome and seek out opportunities to work together with state legislators on behalf of the people we serve.

3. How will you support the right of workers to organize?

First and foremost, I will continue showing up to support workers in every struggle. Unions are an important part of a thriving democracy. Yet, while Massachusetts has the oldest Constitution in the world – and we're proud to hold that mantle – we don't see enough



democracy in workplaces. Workers deserve to shape their working environment through collective bargaining, and our businesses and city government should be accountable to the workers and communities they rely on. I will always support workers' rights to organize every way I can.

As a city councilor I can ease the burden on workers by requiring unionized labor for city contracts, only hiring department heads who strongly support collective organizing, and negotiating large enough budgets to ensure every city employee has a living wage.

Finally, we cannot tolerate union-busting in any form, because of the chilling effect it has on organizing. Union-busting is a denial of rights and a suppression of our democratic ideals. City officials should work with unions, not against them.

4. What do you view as the two (2) biggest challenges in Northampton and what are three (3) specific things you would do to remedy them?

The current Northampton city government is straining city residents, who are faced with the rising cost of living coupled with the evaporation of city services. Residents are seeing fee after fee rising, such as parking fees, stormwater fees, and trash fees. Yet the very services that city residents make sacrifices to pay for are shrinking or are not being provided at all.

First, I would freeze all fees at their current level and audit the books to ensure that:

- 1) A fee is even necessary,
- 2) Residents aren't being overcharged, and
- 3) Public money is being spent efficiently on public services that make living here safe, affordable, and accessible.

Fully funding our public schools will help our community because our schools touch the lives of almost every resident in the city. If our schools are fully funded, then:

- 1) Our children will have a safe and enriching environment and future,
- 2) Our school staff will have stable and enriching work that pays them a living wage, and
- 3) Our caregivers will be freer to enrich their own lives, the lives of their children, and the community as a whole.



5. How do you understand issues of social/economic/racial justice present in Northampton schools and throughout our community, and what steps would you take to make our community and schools reflect our commitment to social justice?

Justice requires accountability. Accountability requires acknowledgement and action. I am fully committed to both.

I will work alongside local leaders, including Northampton Reparations Study Commissioners, to address housing discrimination, economic exclusion, and educational disparities. And it starts with a city council that passes equity-focused budgets to support everyone.

In our public schools, that means addressing our chronic underfunding of accessible infrastructure, special education services, math and reading interventions, and English-language learning.

In our communities, it means scaffolding mutual aid networks and fully funding public services such as the Division of Community Care, shelters, and libraries, while divesting from any services that take resources out of our community.

And on our streets, it means shoring up our sidewalks and building out public transportation so that the city is accessible to everyone, regardless of income or ability. The community has the political will and resources to do this.

What is missing is a city council that is responsive to the public's democratic will. I am committed to ensuring our city council is accountable to – and working for – everyone in Northampton.

6. What is your overall vision for the Northampton Public Schools?

As a representative, my view is based on the public's voices. As a community, we have strong values around public education. And we have tremendously skilled, visionary teachers. In echoing the views of my constituents, I envision schools with:

- 1) The opportunity for every child to feel joyful, inquisitive, and safe at a neighborhood school;
- 2) No added cost for things like bussing, field trips, and before-and-after care;
- 3) Clean, accessible buildings and playgrounds and safe routes to school;
- 4) School staff who are paid enough to live in the city they work in;



- 5) School staff who are fully supported by leadership, without worrying about retaliation from their superintendent, the pressures of arbitrary testing, or questionable curriculums paid for with funds that should be going to teachers and families;
- 6) Classroom supplies that are fully paid for by city government;
- 7) A full spectrum of learning opportunities, from trades to language arts; math, science, and engineering; social-emotional skills and creative expression; civics, sports, and college preparation;
- 8) Small class sizes and an appropriate number of guidance counselors, adjustment councilors, school nurses, clerical workers, librarians, paraprofessionals, and custodians;
- 9) Robust individualized education that honors all children's differences, to ensure every child can access education;
- 10) No layoffs or "bumps," because every school is like a village that deserves to stick together.

We've seen what happens when our schools are defunded, and we know that public education is truly precious. It's time to fully fund our public schools and protect the futures of our children.

7. We've been told that there are not enough financial resources in Northampton to provide for all the needs of our public schools and students. What steps would you take to meet the needs of the schools as defined by the experts on the School Committee to achieve your vision?

We have been misled about city finances, and everyone involved in this work over the past few years knows it. Northampton has the resources to fully fund our schools. What we don't have is a transparent and honest budgeting process. That would be my focus.

First, we would set goals for our schools in community working groups and hearings before the school committee, and those goals would be honored.

We will also conduct operational audits and financial audits to see how we can better leverage available resources. That includes a review of outsourcing to private contractors and charting a plan that restores union jobs and provides funds for collective bargaining.



We will then forecast our financial resources and set a reasonable savings margin, one that is based on keeping our city safe and solvent, not starving our city's services under the guise of "fiscal responsibility." There is nothing responsible about stealing from our children's futures.

From there, we would assess our capital project needs. Capital projects will be chosen democratically based on their utility to all Northampton residents, and they will be paid for with debt exclusions, intelligent borrowing, and strategic use of savings. They will not be paid for by nickel-and-diming our residents or shortchanging our schools and services.

Once those pieces are all on the table together – projected revenue, projected operational costs of schools and city services, and capital-project financing – we will turn to the public through a robust participatory budgeting process based on town halls featuring clear communication about our options and full transparency about our resources.

These processes will go on throughout the year, not at the last minute. And once the city council has fully understood and workshopped various ways to meet the community's needs, interests, and concerns – including those of our workers – then and only then are we ready to vote on a budget. That is true democratic budgeting, and it ensures that city government is accountable to the people it serves.

#### 8. How do you plan to balance the various needs of the city?

In a word: democratically. Our community has strong values. Northampton residents have shouldered tax and fee increases, year after year, in the belief that they are contributing to their community, especially to their schools. The public is more than willing to come together and balance our budgets fairly and equitably. The only reason it hasn't happened is because democratic processes have been impeded at every turn, which is why I believe we need a truly participatory budgeting process.

Right now, we have a paternalistic city government that tells us:

- 1) What is best for us,
- 2) We don't have any choice, and
- 3) It's very hard and complicated and we just wouldn't understand.

The fact is that city government, on paper, is set up so that communities can weigh their own priorities and guide their own decisions around spending. This isn't something for some elite class of experts to do without the public. It is work for the public to do together.



Elected officials can help by:

- 1) Performing rigorous research into our finances,
- 2) Conducting operational audits to check our efficiencies,
- 3) Tapping into the expertise of state municipal finance experts as to all of our legally allowed financial options,
- 4) Laying it all out clearly and simply for the public, and then
- 5) Working with the community on a plan to distribute funds equitably while saving for the future intelligently.

9. What would a People's Budget look like in Northampton, and what would you do to implement it?

A People's Budget would ensure our city is affordable, accessible, and safe, because those are the public's priorities. We all have a right to a city shaped by our values, with policies implemented by a free and democratic government. The people of Northampton should tell the government what is best for them and what is not negotiable. The city government should listen and even allow for direct voting power from the public to decide how we share our resources to care for each other.

Though I can't fully speak for all of Northampton, I believe, based on what I have learned from my constituents, that their budget would include fully funded schools, safe roads and sidewalks, accessible community spaces, dedicated emergency services, and affordable housing for all.

10. Why do you want our endorsement?

I want your endorsement because SOS continues to be a powerful ally in advocating for strong schools and advocating against the anti-democratic culture of the current city government.

My voting record and advocacy shows that we are aligned on those values, especially when it comes to school funding.

This is a historic election cycle for Northampton, and we need at least six city councilors that actually believe in public representation. Every race this year is critical. Every race is an uphill battle. We live in a city that has largely assumed everyone is progressive and everything is fine. Another third of our residents tuned-out long ago, after feeling they'd



been left behind. We are testing the strength and core of our desperately needed local democracy.

I'm seeking the endorsement of SOS for re-election to city council because it's critical that those of us who want better for Northampton come together to let our neighbors know that good candidates are on the ballot who will work together on the public's behalf. Our work won't end with this election cycle – I will always proudly stand with SOS to make sure we support our schools and services.