



# 2021 City Council Candidate Forum VOTER GUIDE

		Would you support rehabilitating, expanding, and better utilizing our existing homes and storefronts?	Is our "Main Street" Downtown healthy and successful? If not, what would you do to change that?	Would you vote in support of a motion to allocate funding from the city budget for reentry programming for incarcerated people who are being released into society?	How would you vote on a motion that says, "racism is a public health issue"?	Do you support having our own version of the Cario's Law (make it a crime for a law enforcement officer to fail to intervene when another officer is using excessive force)?
CITY COUNCILOR AT-LARGE (Choose Up to 3)	John Drinkwater	<p>Yes, absolutely. Particularly in downtown, we have a lot of storefronts that are either empty or under utilized. We need to find creative ways to use those, even if it's temporary use for art or pop-up shops, would be great ways to utilize those spaces. It takes work with the landlords and owners of those buildings, but certainly if we can utilize them and bring some vibrancy to the downtown, it makes a difference. Some of the upper floors can also be used to address more housing.</p>	<p>I don't think it's as successful as it could be, or as successful as it needs to be. Not to ignore some of the successes that have happened, but the past year and a half has been difficult for any business that's operating in the downtown area coming off the pandemic restrictions where they had to find different ways to do business. There are also businesses that have opened during the pandemic that have been successful, so I do want to highlight there are still a lot of business owners that want to take a chance and make the investment in downtown Lowell and I think they see the potential that we do, but we don't have all of our storefronts full and operating like they should be. Until we do that, then we still have a lot of improvements we can make.</p>	<p>Absolutely. This is something that I've worked on a bit through my day job with the AFL-CIO we work on training programs that help facilitate reentry into good paying union jobs and we've worked on a couple of pilot programs around the state, reentry programs that have trained people for entry into the building and construction trades. I would absolutely love to see a program like that here in Lowell that can create a pipeline directly for people from incarceration into a good paying job. Whether it's in the building or construction trades, or other pipelines into careers, it is an extremely worthwhile investment that has been proven to work in other places. I'd definitely be willing to allocate funding through the city or other funding sources as well.</p>	<p>Well, this is an issue that did come up last year at the City Council and I voted yes to declare racism as a public health crisis in the City of Lowell. I felt strongly that the city should make that declaration because when you look at various inequities that exist in the city, in terms of economic outcomes, health outcomes, among residents of Lowell, it's undeniable that many of those inequities correlate directly to race and historic inequities that have existed throughout this country and this city is not immune from those sorts of inequities and injustices. So I did feel strongly in making that declaration to begin to take steps forward and address policy outcomes and solutions, but definitely support that statement and declaration.</p>	<p>Yes and I believe that was addressed at least somewhat in the recent police reform law that passed in the State Legislature, but the duty to intervene is something that came up and that's something that's important to address in law, that officers do have the duty to intervene if they see something wrong, even if it's a colleague of a senior colleague and they need to feel supported that if they do step in, they'll have support. There can be a lot of pressure to not do or say anything particularly when you're dealing with a senior colleague, but we need to get rid of that feeling amongst officers and make sure they feel supported for doing the right thing.</p>
	Bob Hoey	<p>Yeah, I'm for anything that's going to make our city beautiful. I'd be for it.</p>	<p>It's a "no" for sure. It's ugly to me. If you have a better police department, you don't have to be forceful, you just have to know how to talk to people who are homeless. If you have the right leadership, you can change a lot of things whether it's speeding cars or people laying in our doorsteps downtown.</p>	<p>I feel that there's nothing more important than programs like UTEC. The difference between my age group and the young kids today, is they don't have the U.S. Army. I dropped out of high school, and I got elected to your School Committee four times as a high school dropout. The Army used to take dropouts. If I was elected, I would be looking to get some of that \$70 million [ARPA] coming to Lowell for UTEC.</p>	<p>I had to vote on that before, and I would vote against that. I believe Lowell is a great place. I've been all over America. I'm from a place where you don't feel comfortable living in... I would never vote for that issue. I didn't vote for it before, and I won't vote for it again because I've got faith in people, and I think Lowell is a tremendous place to live.</p>	<p>That's quite a law. I can only speak as a prison guard working in a place where we would sometimes have to cuff up a person or restrain them. No one would ever violate any law in front of me, especially if you're doing something illegal. I worry about my job because I want that paycheck coming to my house, and I wouldn't let anybody because I have a backbone. You don't let someone else hurt somebody in front of you, your job as a prison guard or police officer, is to protect life.</p>
	Rita Mercier	<p>Yes, that's what we need. What we need is, I'd like to see people come together who own buildings and see if we can come to some agreement, that they should get something instead of nothing at all. We have empty storefronts downtown and I'm understanding that the reason for that, is people want a lot of money. Would you rather get something than nothing at all? I don't know why we couldn't come to consensus to see if they could help with revitalizing their place. Maybe there's grants for them and for housing, yes, we need more affordable housing, but not at the expense of neighborhoods that could face increase in cars and parking.</p>	<p>What's happening in the downtown, is empty storefronts and that was prevalent many years ago when the malls came into existence and people went out to the outskirts and had plenty of places to park instead of fighting for a place to park in the downtown. As a City Councilor, I know that we have many businesses that are coming here too, like Sahel who just opened up on Central Street. They had an open house in which I was there. Very delicious. If you went by, you wouldn't believe what you see when you go inside. The owner spent half a million dollars to refurbish. That's what I'd like to see more of. We are residents of the city, it's incumbent upon us to support our local businesses so they stay in the city. It's holding its own, but it could be a lot better.</p>	<p>I don't know that we could do that from the city budget, but we do need to have some sort of program whereby people that have been incarcerated, and I know about that because it's happened in my own family as well and that doesn't make them a bad person, they were unfortunate to some degree, so if they come out, do we not help them? I would be in favor of finding the money somehow. I don't know exactly where we'd get it, but there's always grants available if people can find the right thing. That's a part of society that we take for granted and we don't seem to focus on that, but it's very important to me.</p>	<p>Well, we already had that motion, and we have nine city councilors, six of us voted that it isn't a public health crisis. Is it prevalent in the city to some degree? Probably it is, but to say the word "crisis" I couldn't say the word crisis. I don't want the city to be viewed as a crisis. If racism is such a crisis, why are people from Afghanistan coming here? In Lowell High School alone we have close to 63 different nationalities. People come here from all over the world. If it's such a bad city, why are people coming here from all around the world? Is homelessness a public health crisis? Yes. Is drug addiction? Yes. I'm not saying racism doesn't exist. We as a city just hired a DEI Officer. This is what we do, we do the best we can.</p>	<p>Yes, I feel they should protect whistle blowers. That is very important, yes. For example, the incident where the police officer took that man [George Floyd] and put his knee on his neck and he died, the officers should have stepped in; they're just as much to blame. Yes, I support that.</p>
	Vesna Nuon	<p>It's important to have wrap-around services, storefronts, and rehab. UTEC has done a lot for the city. I started with the Board of UTEC down on Merrimack Street helping to hire your director. UTEC has done a lot for the community, particularly the young people showing them direction, that they can do better, and where they come from.</p>	<p>We can't just focus on downtown alone. You have to also look at other gateway neighborhoods like say like Bridge St., Mammoth Road, the Highland, those are areas we also have to focus. To focus on downtown economic development, you also have to think about the upstairs, not just the storefront. The upstairs creates foot traffic. The owners have to have incentives to fix up the upstairs, so you'll have people either live up there or have an office up there. They are the foot traffic that will support the businesses downtown, but it takes partnership with the building owners and the city. You also have to help the small businesses in neighborhood corridors.</p>	<p>We have ARPA money, \$76 million, one time money from the federal government to address the impact the pandemic has had on cities and towns. Some of this money is going to be used for infrastructure and lost revenues, as well as to use the money to help with programs. COVID not only impacted the lives of families but it highlighted disparities and the inequities that we face as a city in education, housing and so on. In regard to reentry from incarceration, we should work closely with the Sheriff, or District Attorney's office to better understand the whole picture and to find the opportunities. If we have programs through all those different points: Police Department, DA'S Office, non-profits, etc. I'd like to see how much we're spending on that and compare us to other communities. If Lowell was spending less on this than similar sized cities, then I'd say yes, I'd make the case for funding.</p>	<p>I support the motion that says "racism is a public health crisis." I was on the receiving end of it. If you look back at 2019, I had an incident with one of the officers from the city. I've been in public safety for 31 years. At the time, there were no Asian police officers. We worked to get grant funding to get Cambodian police officers. It's important to have a diverse workforce in the city. The issue is difficult and uncomfortable for some. It costs money to address systemic racism and the inequities in education, housing, and employment. It's an uncomfortable issue, but it's important that we deal with it because it makes us stronger and healthier as a city.</p>	<p>I don't know much about the law, but I'd be more than happy to study more about the law. What I'm happy about now, I've been advocating for, and I know it's been difficult for the police union. Recently they did a negotiation with the contract and part of the agreement is that the Lowell Police Department now agreed to use body cameras as a project. Body cameras do two things, one: they build trust between police and the community and two: just about every citizen has a camera on their phone and they can take it whenever they want to take it. It's good to have it to build trust, and more importantly it will validate what the police say in their report. It's a good thing to do. I'd be more than happy to look into [the Cario's Law].</p>
	Bobby Tugbiyele	<p>Absolutely. I've lived downtown for 13 years. I actually bought a condo right on Middle Street and living downtown for the last decade, we've seen a lot of changes. We've seen a lot of business come, and a lot go. Often when they leave, what is left behind is an empty storefront. We have to do everything we can to fill them up with entrepreneurs and small business owners. Lowell's a great place for that. I actually started my own small business in Lowell after going through a program called E-4 All and there's a program at Middlesex Community College called Launch. Some of the UTEC young people who have hobbies that they'd love to make into a business, I'd love to get those folks into some of those storefronts. Lowell's getting over \$75 million [ARPA] and how we spend that money is very important. And could be used to help small business owners.</p>	<p>I would say no. I don't think it's healthy for a number of reasons. We're obviously getting passed the pandemic and all of us are not healthy. Whether you're dealing with mental health, physical health, family situations. Whether you see it or not, we're all going through something. Our downtown's physical environment isn't healthy because we see vacant store fronts and we see homelessness. We also know that homelessness can look differently, sometimes it's folks couch-surfing. I'd love to see more folks walking downtown. When a whole bunch of people come downtown, it becomes more lively, more exciting, and it helps the businesses, and it helps with economic development and with giving the downtown a positive vibe. We can do more to make downtown healthy and inspire people to come downtown.</p>	<p>One thing I'd want to find out first, is there an actual budget in place for that activity. One thing I don't like doing is speaking without knowledge, so I'd like to learn what the city is already doing to support formerly incarcerated people in partnership with the Sheriff, or District Attorney's office to better understand the whole picture and to find the opportunities. If we have programs through all those different points: Police Department, DA'S Office, non-profits, etc. I'd like to see how much we're spending on that and compare us to other communities. If Lowell was spending less on this than similar sized cities, then I'd say yes, I'd make the case for funding.</p>	<p>Great question. For those who do not know, I co-lead the citywide effort last year, post the murder of George Floyd, to have the city of Lowell declare racism a public health crisis. At that point, I was the co-chair of the advocacy sub-committee for the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Consortium of Lowell. The Consortium wasn't just one or two people, this was various organizations around the city, everyone banding together to say we stand in solidarity that we're going to deal with systemic issues that have existed for centuries. Even though we're not living in a time where we see people walking around with white hoods on, or drinking from different water fountains, things are behind the scenes, a lot of systemic things we don't realize, and it affects all of us. As Councilor if that opportunity presented itself then I would have done that 100%. Unfortunately, that declaration failed at City Council but was upheld on the School Committee. There's a disconnect there and we need to be on the same page on these issues. Anyone who is running for City Council today who was against that motion is on the wrong side of history and failed our city. You should know who did that, because that's part of the voting process to know what the record was.</p>	<p>On a general level, as we talk about policing, and the community, and young people, without a doubt, things must be improved. For me I see it in two ways. One, what do police officers need to be successful to make the community feel safe and secure, and two, how do we make those who've historically felt unsafe around police, how do they feel supported as well. To bridge those gaps, it takes honesty, leadership, empathy, humility to say, "I don't know, but I'm willing to understand." It takes someone who is willing to do the work to better understand what's going on in your lived experience vs my lived experience. I'm willing to put in the work to get educated in areas, but I'm also right there with anyone else who wants support too.</p>
<p><b>Deb Belanger</b>    Regrettably, this candidate was not able to attend.</p>						



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District 1	<b>Rodney Elliott</b> Regrettably, this candidate was not able to attend.				
	<b>Dan Rourke</b> Regrettably, this candidate was not able to attend.				
District 2	<b>Robert Gignac</b> Absolutely, I think revitalizing neighborhoods is critically important to the economic success of our city.	I don't think it's at the point where can call it healthy and successful. We're still struggling with homelessness, with vacant storefronts, and it's a major construction zone right now so it's difficult for people to get down here to explore the shops and restaurants that we have and so there's a lot of work to be done in this area. The overarching issue is homelessness and its impact on downtown and the neighborhoods. We should look at full day programming that provides wrap-around services that keep folks engaged through the day so they can improve their lives and now just a place to sleep.	The city has worked well with organizations like UTEC in securing funds to support reentry. One of my first jobs was at the Career Center where I helped on the financial end to support organizations like UTEC through reentry programs. I certainly think that the funds are out there, we're primed to receive those funds, and it's important that we access those moneys to assist with reentry in our community.	I certainly would have voted in support of that motion. I think declaring racism as a public health crisis is the least our city leaders can do and it helps guide the framework on the work that needs to be done. As an elected official, it's my job to listen to the people who put me in that position. The people that I've listened to over the past year or so since this issue has really come up, are telling me it's an issue. The health experts are telling me it's an issue. The people who deal with racism every day are telling me this issue is real. I believe it's real and I will work hard to bring the right people to the table to help solve this problem.	I'll admit, I don't know the specifics of the law, I haven't read the law, but I certainly will after I leave here. What it comes to is police accountability. I think it's important that we hold every public official or position accountable for their actions and so I would certainly support accountability across the board, including our public safety officers.
	<b>Corey Robinson</b> Absolutely. Especially some of our existing empty buildings like right next door, the District Court House. I don't see how it's sitting empty when we see a crunch on housing. Economic development needs to be spurred by working with younger generations, especially to get them brick and mortar locations to start getting their hands into small business ownership like culinary programs etc. I think it's a no-brainer and I'd be 100% on board.	I'd have to say "no" right now and parking is a big part of it. The number one thing for businesses, is you need people with disposable incomes and foot traffic. Local government needs to wrap our arms around this district to support it to provide parking opportunities, and to make sure it's clean. We should take a look at the old historical codes and bylaws that would allow for better signage. Absolutely I think we can improve it. I'm not saying it isn't thriving or doing okay, but there's only room for improvement.	Absolutely, I think that's important to give people a second shot. I myself am a product of a second opportunity. I was going to public school, I quit two years working odds jobs, went back to school and finished, got my foot into the door of local government in the city and never looked back. I'm all about it. It's easy to fall off that straight and narrow path, but as long as those opportunities exist to get back on track, I support that fully.	I would support it. I'm half black, half Irish myself and I look at it like this: there's scientific data that proves there has been negative impacts to the health of minorities in particular and in communities. We saw it with the pandemic where poorer and more densely populated parts of our cities where minorities live weren't afforded the same opportunities when it came to vaccines and testing. Whether its consciously or unconsciously, we need to start having these conversations and everybody needs to keep that in the back of their mind. If the community is coming forward stating that they want their elected officials to support something that they feel strongly about and has been proven, and they've shown the information to justify the stance, absolutely. As an advocate, you're there to represent the people. How could you not?	I would definitely look into something like that because I agree with that theory. If you see something, do something. If you're walking down the street and you're seeing someone, get jumped by multiple people, it's your duty to intervene the best you can. If these are sworn officers and there's one or two going above and beyond, taking matters into their own hands unlawfully, those on the scene should intervene because the law is being broken. I would definitely look into something like that and most likely support it.
District 3	<b>John Leahy</b> Regrettably, this candidate was not able to attend.				
	<b>Bill Samaras</b> Of course. That has to happen. When you're talking about restructuring and things like that like what President Biden wants to do with monies. Especially urban centers, they need to be revitalized to help the businesses and people in their homes.	Lowell is a great city. Lowell's one of the finest mid-sized cities in the country. COVID has created a lot of problems and a lot of people have left the streets, so to speak, but today when you look at a city like downtown Lowell, you see some businesses thriving and others not doing so well. Those businesses not doing so well, we must develop programs to help the owners become better businesspeople; how to run their businesses and to be more effective. There are certain areas where there is poor lighting, and we need better lighting downtown. There's also the issue of homelessness and we need to do a better job taking the homeless off the street and give them programs that will work for them. UTEC is a program to help youth see them where they're at, and that's what we have to do with the homeless.	That's something that we have to do. We don't have control of how people are treated in the institutions. Some institutions will find them a job. What they do is getting them into training programs and they come out with skills and knowledge. I'd like to see programs that take people coming from incarceration. If there's an obstacle that has to be dealt with, that's what we deal with. If there's a skill, that's what we have to do. First of all, we say, "okay you had a problem? You served your time? Now you're coming back to society." Let's give you the opportunity to be successful. If you close the doors, you're going to have problems. I learned that as the headmaster of Lowell High School, you have to reach out to people.	When that came in, I had been concerned because there were other issues with the racism issue. I said that it exists in Lowell, it exists everywhere, but it has to be dealt with. But I have a different view on how to deal with this issue. We have to have more meetings at the City level on the issue of racism on what steps need to be taken. We really haven't done that yet. When dealing with the issue of racism, some people say, "I'm not a racist, I'm a good person," and they are, but sometimes they don't understand that some of their actions are racial in nature. They don't understand what people have gone through who have suffered racism. We need to have that discussion on the floor of our city council and in our workplaces on how to address these issues in a positive manner that brings everybody into the tent to work on those issues.	I would have to understand the whole issue of that law. I have not supported defunding police. It's just like everything else: there are good policemen, there are bad policemen, there are good teachers and bad teachers, there are good doctors and bad doctors. What I did support is a civilian board to help with the Chief of Police in Lowell to look at all of these cases. The George Floyd case was an example of something that was completely wrong and every police officer I know said it was deplorable. I'm not into the punishment, I'm into the things we have to do to support police. More money has to go into policing, but for training, for how to take a situation and calm it down. The more people understand, and we give them the tools, there won't be conflict with youth on the streets.
District 4	<b>Wayne Jenness</b> Absolutely. There's a lot of potential across Lowell, a lot of untapped potential. With just not a huge investment, we can make a big difference in the feel and look of the neighborhood and that's going to bring more people in and make it a better place to hang out, shop, grow up to work, and to live. I think that spending a little money to make the place look nicer and be more comfortable and welcoming would go a long way.	I live downtown on Market Street. I love living downtown, I've lived here since 2009. Over a decade now, I've seen a little change here and there, some things change, some things stay the same. I would say Downtown is on its way to thriving. I think we were making some good strides before the pandemic and unfortunately, I think the pandemic has paused things and we're still fighting our way out of it. I think our Economic Development Department in particular has done a great job with maintaining our business base in the Downtown through the pandemic. They've really worked hand in hand with all the businesses downtown and we really haven't lost many businesses in Lowell compared to other cities around. As we come out of the pandemic, I want to make sure we maintain that hand-in-glove approach and really work with the existing and new businesses to get the Downtown back to a thriving situation and past the survival situation.	I would love to see what that would look like. In general, I would certainly support something like that. I feel like a lot of people coming back out don't get the best reentry into society and to set you up to be in a situation here you end up back making the same mistakes or additional mistakes to put you back into incarceration and anyone who ends up in prison, is still a member of our community. Anybody who grew up here or anywhere, if they make a mistake and they end up in jail, it needs to be rehabilitative. We really have to help people and bring them back to be a productive member of society. Whether that's work training programs, or housing support, or whatever people need to get a good entry back into society, I think it's incumbent upon the city to help people. We should also get the state to help us with that because this is a state level thing as well and the state has a lot more resources than the city.	I would absolutely vote to approve that. I was very disappointed when it didn't pass at the City Council. I was happy that the School Committee did approve it because it is important when you just simply look at the data. When you look at what it means to be white in our society versus not white in our society and what that means for your health and economic opportunity, it's clear as day. One statistic that I've cited repeatedly is the infant mortality rate for black women in the United States, it is so much higher than any other race. Melanin in your skin doesn't mean you should die during childbirth. How have we built a system where this has been happening for as long as it has. It's really time to sit down and figure this out because it's just not right. When I worked at the Community Health Center for a year and a half, I was really impressed with the work the Health Center did with the outreach to all the various communities in Lowell. They've got a good foundation, but they can only do so much, so anything we can do as a City Council to help push that forward and recognizing racism as a public health crisis is step one.	I think I absolutely would. The Lowell police and the other police agencies in Lowell, the National Park, the University, I think they've done a good job of being a community police organization. Chief Richardson in particular has done a good job of pushing this forward. But being a community policing, you really need to put community first. A measure like that I think would go a long way to integrating the police force into the community and make them more responsive and make the people in the city who are interacting with the police feel safer and know that if something happens, that those other officers who are involved will be more inclined to step in and stop something when something's going wrong. Every opportunity we have to build better relationships between the police and the community is something I think we should explore and dive into and I'd like to learn more about that to figure out what we could do.
	<b>Ryan Rourke</b> Absolutely. We have a lot of opportunity, especially here in the downtown district, with a ton of empty storefronts, whether you're using them to hopefully bring in new businesses or services. An empty storefront doesn't send a good signal to the community. Even around here, the old Court House is all boarded up and essentially a homeless camp on the old Courthouse steps so, utilize what we have as an existing structure, whether you're turning it into a homeless shelter, I think we have plenty of space to do that downtown and around downtown as well.	I think it's getting there. We're on the upswing. There are a lot of existing businesses that are doing great, and I know there's a few new ones coming in. I think that just waiting for it to happen isn't enough. I think if we go out there and really advocate to make Downtown a little more clean, more safe, more welcoming with public private partnerships, I think we can bring it up to an "A."	Yea, I think that's a great question because I would support that. I've known UTEC for a long time and I know it's core mission. Taking people from a situation that's not ideal and just throwing them out there, they're going to end up back there through recidivism. Follow-up is not something that a lot of people are really good at and I think that UTEC is a good follow-up and follow through organization. Instead of just saying "well you did your jail time, you're rehabbed, have a good life," you guys are like, "hey let's see what we can do." Whether it's job openings or the economy, if you can take that person who's obviously had a rough patch, let's get them back to not just be okay but really thrive, so yeah, I would support that.	Yeah, I definitely think racism meets the definition of a public health crisis. I've even said in the past that it goes so far to meet the definition of a natural disaster. It really is something that affects more than just interactions on the day to day but it's a big determinant of health and the economy. That being said, a lot of people were equating racism as a public health crisis with Lowell being a racist city. Inherently I think we're a pretty good melting pot of a city, but that doesn't mean we're perfect. I've only been one person in this life. Your experience is different and you're going to think about it differently so unless you have empathy, or listen to each other, we're not going to be able to do solve that problem.	Obviously, the George Floyd made that a more national issue. I think that we're all humans so regardless of your position if you're a policeman, fireman, whatever, if you see something wrong, you have to say something. Killing an unarmed suspect is not a protocol for any law enforcement officer, so if you see that happening, it is incumbent upon those folks. I would support any kind of notion that you are supposed to intervene with things of that nature.



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		Kim Scott <small>Regrettably, this candidate was not able to attend.</small>				
District 5	Tooch Van	Yes, I would.	Downtown's revitalization needs to be worked on. I'm part of the Business Revitalization Recovery Task Force. We provide grants and work to support small businesses in downtown, so those business can do digital marketing and business planning so they can keep their doors open.	Yes, for sure so they can re-enter society and get a job I believe that everybody needs a second chance, so when they come back we can create vocational training and job training for them so they can restart their life. I believe they've served their time and everybody needs their second chance. Some people need second, third, so yeah, I believe people deserve it. I myself had a second chance to get an education after my parents passed away when I was five years old. It has been a struggle in life, but I earned survival skills and resilience and got a second chance to come to America to get an education and to get a profession over twenty years, so second chance? Absolutely.	This is an issue near and dear to my heart. First of all, I think we in Lowell have to win one thing: that racism is a public health crisis in Lowell. We have to own that. Anything else that is systemic, we have to find ways to fix the problems. We're not saying that Lowell is bad, we're saying that Lowell has some issues to work on and address. So, like anything else in life, to find the right solutions, we have to find the right diagnosis, so we have to have open and frank discussions to address racism in Lowell. Also, the data has shown that. We have to work on that, so absolutely I would vote yes on this motion.	I have to admit, I have to study this law, but my principle in general, I like police, but every police officer has to treat every person equally. Also, I believe in policing in communities where the police and community members work together where police officers attend community events and serve pizza, or play bocce, play anything with the community members so as to build a close relationship between community members and police officers.
	Sokhary Chau	Absolutely. Lowell is such a good city that's a mix of old cultures and new cultures. There's new businesses and old businesses and infrastructure. Anything that needs to be rehabbed that is low-cost and effective, like rehabbing storefronts to make sure they're inviting and up to date and that looks good for everybody.	Absolutely for the most part, we're lucky to have a vibrant downtown community. Our downtown is a lot different than many downtowns in other cities. We have a mixture of residents and businesses that make it different. There's a balance to make sure you have a safe environment, a good downtown neighborhood for the residents and also to have a healthy business environment for businesses. Some businesses are struggling due to the COVID-19 pandemic and there are many development projects but once it's done downtown is going to be very beautiful.	Absolutely. Everyone makes mistakes in their lives. The most important, the people who are incarcerated, they've served their time and hopefully they have learned something. When they come out, everyone deserves a second chance and importantly to become a productive member of society. If you don't have resources for these people, how are they going to fit back into the community? We don't want people to relapse because that costs society even more.	The issue of a motion that says racism is a public health crisis, is not saying that any one person is racist. I have experienced it, and I did support the motion, not to say that the city is racist, but to say that it's a public health crisis. For the most part, we need to accept diversity and support one another, but there is a point in life when you're walking by yourself. When I walk that mile by myself, I do experience people discriminating against me. It's not a lot, but if one person feels one incident of racism, we must address it. Racism exists, even if one person says it, and that's good enough for us to address it.	I think in some cities and some states, it's appropriate. We have to look in our own city. We are very, very fortunate to have the Lowell Police Department. The way that they have the standards of practice, they implemented this idea of community policing. They've done a great job. When I first came to Lowell in the 1980's it was rough back then. You can't walk anywhere without having problems with gangs or with intervention by police to keep the peace. The Lowell Police implemented community policing and they have improved that relationship a lot in our communities. There's always a problem when you feel like the other group of people are on the opposite than yours, or we don't understand each other. The LPD make sure that they're on your side with foot patrol and bicycling and being more present in our community. That's why you see the community have a good relationship with the Lowell Police Department.
District 6	Justin Ford	Yes. Revitalizing storefronts is something that's an important issue that we should be looking into. Right now in Downtown, it's falling and failing. I definitely do agree with revitalizing the downtown, the storefronts as well as vacant buildings throughout the city. We have a homelessness problem as well, so we can use those buildings to provide more affordable housing by working with organizations like Coalition for a Better Acre to help with more homes for the homeless and people who are housing insecure.	No, I wouldn't say it's healthy and successful. You talk about a lot of the different issues that are going on Downtown like smell, trash, cleanup, things like that, that creates a health problem. Safety. A lot of people are using more drugs since during the pandemic. We were working on bringing down our opioid epidemic numbers over the last five years, but the Coronavirus safety issue flipped the script on that and it's creating a serious safety issue downtown. If somebody is on serious drugs, they're unpredictable.	I would have to look into that question more. That's a tough question to answer. I need more time to think on that.	I would vote on that right now, if I could, if I was on City Council. Racism is a public health crisis. A lot of us think of racism as someone just using a derogatory slur towards you, but racism is engrained in every institution in this country. I served in the military, I still serve, and I see issues with racism as a paralegal and I see how Black and brown people have higher conviction rates than their white counterparts as well as their sentences are usually longer. You can go into health and talk about why do Black women die at four times higher rates from having childbirth? When you have people of color throughout the system that reflect your background, it's healthier because they know what the struggles are in the community and they might also be able to see things that you can't see. Racism is a public health crisis, it's dangerous to the city, and we need to make sure we tackle that issue.	It's very important for police accountability, and to go as far as saying it would be a crime for you not to report? I think you'd have to get the verbiage perfect on that so if someone is in a situation that could be borderline, that you don't lock a person into that situation. I think there's a way to get that done. As to say "it's a crime" right up front, I'm not sure I can get there, but I think there's a way to draft that legislation better, maybe to focus on the fact of if excessive force was used in your presence. Everybody in the scene around should be fired immediately like what we saw with George Floyd. As you're going lower down, it's going to get hard to see where the line is.
	Dave Ouellette	Yes. I've been working on a program now with eight different contractors for the Upper Merrimack St. and that's just what we're doing. We're bringing in 250 more living units varying from brand new condos to people who have won their battle with addiction to veterans. I've been working with the developer to make sure there's new storefronts at the street level, there should be about eight new storefronts as well. We succeeded in the Acre. I've been working with people for years helping people succeed. As the Senior Health Inspector for the city of Lowell, I helped open a lot of businesses to make sure they could start off on a positive note and head for success.	We don't have a vibrant Downtown like we should have. There's a lot of things that contribute to that. One is, a lot of people open up a business, but they don't succeed because of the business plan. We need more people downtown with disposable income. We need help for the people who are homeless living there on the streets. A lot of it is not their fault because I've been doing research as to why they're sleeping there. I know a lot of them by name from going to homeless camps when I worked with the city. If you throw a program to the middle of the city, people don't have transportation, so you need wraparound services. People don't have access to get miles away and then to come back the next day so you're staying close to where your services are. We can also better use the upper floors of downtown buildings. Businesses should also benefit from the city's de-leading program.	Yes. There should be a program that is working on it. I spoke to the Bridge Program and they're starting a program just like that, so when you're getting close to being released, they're give you training like ServSafe or whatever your need is and then you'll be trained into a job and your chances to succeed are huge. Yes, I'd support that.	Yes it is. I'm in the Health Department and everything else. The city itself, I'm not so sure. Is it a public health crisis? Yes it is. I used to do inspection for Section 8 housing and there were enough times when I told a landlord to fix something, the landlord would say, "that's good enough for them." I said, that's not good enough, this is where people are going to live and raise their families. Another good example of that, is during the COVID pandemic, our areas could not get vaccinated. The first area it was sent to was Gillette Stadium in Foxboro. Foxboro is 97% white and that's where everyone had to travel to get a vaccine. Thanks God we all fought to get the Lawrence General clinic open on the Boulevard. There's all kinds of stuff there, it should have been in our area. But to call our city racist? I see all the good people like UTEC, CBA, CTI, all the different programs that work together. Is it around? Yes and I do say that racism is a public health crisis.	Well, yeah because if somebody is going above and beyond, somebody should be able to get their attention before it goes too far. I work with the police quite a bit in Lowell, going in on raids and other things. I've never seen that they've gone above and beyond, so I have faith in our police force, so I see no reason that an officer does have a right if he sees, and sometimes it's hard to tell your boss that something is going on. Under the guise of Kelly Richardson, community policing is very interactive with us. They join Acre-Fest and National Night Out, so I think that when there's someone going above and beyond and that the city of Lowell watches closely, and that if we see it, it's being corrected. If you're doing wrong, somebody should have the right to tell you to stop, so it doesn't reach another level.
District 7	Paul-Ratha Yem	Yes. If I may say, my profession is real estate broker and before that, I was the executive director at the Cambodian American League and there were two buildings sitting idly next to Washington Savings Bank and I was able to convert that into 24 affordable housing and five commercial storefronts on the first floor. If you drive by on Middlesex Street, you'll see Sim's driving school, that's where my office used to be.	The Downtown, when you look there's a lot of closed storefronts and homelessness and that's not good for the city. As a City Councilor we'd look at alternatives. In my experience, I've been able to attract business that move into the city of Lowell. For example, at 355 Market St., I was able to attract Tasty Dumpling, a well-known successful restaurant in Miami, Florida. They were looking to expand to this area, and I helped them find Market Street. If you're able to stop by, the food is excellent.	I would love to do that. I would also, not just support that, but provide training to readjust back into society. They need employable skills, so I would definitely allocate my support to that initiative and program.	I would vote yes. Racism is a public health crisis, and I would take a step forward and say it's a pandemic, just like the coronavirus. When it's a pandemic, you need to address it with treatment. As a person of color and a refugee and immigrant myself, I am also the subject of racism and name-calling where people tell me to "come back from where I came from," so I would vote yes that racism is a public health crisis.	Yes, I would support. This is part of the on-going training that the police go through, like any of us in a professional setting. In my previous job, I worked at the Attorney General's office in the Civil Rights Division. We would do trainings for police to recognize and understand the civil rights of the people. We saw this play out in the media around the killing of George Floyd and other people of color: black, Asian, Latinos. This is critical and I would support it. I would encourage other officers to speak up. Just like any community, you don't want one bad apple to tarnish your reputation as a group.
	Ty Chum	Heck yeah. I love you guys. I went to the storefront for breakfast and the food is good. There are an awful lot of opportunities for you guys. Sometimes when we get into trouble and come back out and sometimes there's no jobs. But this is a place where you can get a second chance and I support it.	I support anything to do with you guys. UTEC is doing an amazing job with the community. I see you out there helping folks out. You can get your GED and they show you where to go I look forward to supporting you expanding more.	Yes of course absolutely. It's tough when you get a tough background. Coming out, there's a stigma and you can't really do much. That's not right. That kind of brings you down when you just want a chance, but society keeps kicking you back and forth. I support it fully.	That's a tough question. I've been thinking about it a lot. I grew up in a tough neighborhood in Centralville, in public housing with drive-by shootings, but I don't believe that racism is a public health issue. What I believe is sexual violence and domestic violence is a public health crisis. You hear it at night, especially when you live in a tough neighborhood. I believe in violence prevention. Go out to talk to the young people on the basketball court. Use case managers or Streetworkers to go out and talk to kids to see what they need.	Absolutely. No one should turn a blind eye on that stuff. It doesn't matter your race or class, it doesn't matter. If there's a police officer there, seeing it and not doing anything, that's a seriously problem.
		Erik Gitschier <small>Regrettably, this candidate was not able to attend.</small>				