



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2021 Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Zach Iscol

Office Sought: Mayor

Candidate Email Address: ZachIscol@gmail.com

Candidate Phone Number: 917-769-6228

Campaign Contact Name: Glomani Bravo-Lopez

Campaign Contact Phone: 347-831-0196

Campaign Contact Email: Glomani@ZachIscol.com

Name of person filling out this questionnaire: Glomani Bravo-Lopez

Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability:

1) If elected, what would be your top priority in your first term?

My top priority and that of my administration would be to reorganize our siloed city government, to bring transparency to the fore and transform it into a system which coordinates and synchronizes efforts to address interconnected issues. We need to reimagine the structure and the culture of city government, interagency communication, establish a culture of community service and produce results for New Yorkers. I would establish a unified task force representative of every agency across the city to truly change how we go about business.

2) What personal and/or professional experiences do you believe make you uniquely qualified to run for New York City Mayor? Attach resume or CV if desired.

I served in the United States Marine Corps, where I led US and Iraqi troops during some of the heaviest combat of the Iraq war. I never expected to lose more Marines to suicide than we did to enemy action. That experience led me to build Headstrong, one of the largest and leading providers of mental healthcare in the United States. During the pandemic, I stepped up to lead the turnaround of the Javits Medical Center, where we had 28 Federal, State, and City agencies, and one of the greatest challenges was getting them all to work together. If elected, I will bring this crisis management and mental health expertise to City Hall and my administration would ensure communication at all levels and between all agencies - something which has long been absent.

3) List all of your endorsements, including but not limited to elected officials, unions, political clubs and community-based organizations.

As of this writing, I have only been endorsed by Ryan Manion, President of the Travis Manion Foundation, however I am in the process of seeking the endorsements of various elected officials, political clubs and community based organizations across the city.

4) What, if any, groups or industries will you not accept campaign contributions from? If any, please note specifically whose money you will not accept.

I am proud to be participating in the NYC Campaign Finance Board matching funds program, which sets clear restrictions for how my campaign can raise funds and allows for a fair process and does not allow individuals to have any outsize influence.



5) How do you propose helping NYC recover from the COVID pandemic and resulting economic recession, particularly given the projected shortfall in city revenue?

The city must learn to do more with less. The next mayor must focus on growth in a way which creates efficiencies. New York City's budget has grown year over year, without any fiscal prudence or responsibility, leading us to a place where we are now Taxing the rich is not the answer. Mayor DeBlasio has increased the budget nearly \$20 billion while in office, to \$95 billion despite being cautioned to leave a reserve. We must foster a growth mindset and remove bureaucratic hurdles and red tape to allow our small businesses to grow and prosper. My administration would work with NYC Small Business Services to empower BIDs merchant members and support small business across the city. New York City has an attractive credit rating, which we can use to provide a financing mechanism such as a municipal bond sale to help those most impacted - in particular our small businesses and the many residential and commercial tenants at risk of eviction once the moratoriums expire. We also need to work with our state and federal government - something the current administration has failed to do - to request aid at all levels. Government accountability is another central part of my campaign. Not only has the budget ballooned since DeBlasio took office, but we are accomplishing less. We will work with public-private partnerships to pick up the slack and focus on an ambitious one million jobs plan to provide New Yorkers with resilient jobs in the public and private sector - the jobs of today and tomorrow. My administration will tackle waste in our budget and ensure that we are being responsible stewards of our resources and ensure a reserve to get the city into a place where it is cash positive with resources on hand to help New Yorkers.

6) What measures would you take to improve educational opportunities for all students in NYC? How do you plan to ensure that all NYC children are able to attend high-quality, integrated schools? Do you support D15's integration plan as it has been implemented? What changes, if any, would you make to the current D15 integration plan?

I believe that this administration has largely failed our children. We need to re-imagine the culture within our schools, starting with the relationship with students, parents and families as opposed to a confrontational relationship which exists today. This starts with the Mayor and the Chancellor. I believe in merit and the value in our gifted and talented programs and specialized middle and high schools. My mother was one of the first white teachers to cross the picket line when schools were integrated, and the situation we have in our city's school system here in 2021 is indefensible. However, the Mayor's ham-fisted approach and focus on integration by shuffling children around is not the answer - and it speaks volumes about the administration's priorities. We also have to be considerate - especially given the budget situation - about the impacts of school redistricting so as to avoid the adverse impacts such as making schools which rely heavily on Title 9 funds and free and reduced lunch programs ineligible for funding and resources, which disparately impacts students and communities of color. District 15's integration plan and re-drawing of school district lines is a step in the right direction, but it's focus is again on integration as opposed to school enrichment and opportunity for all students. If we are continuing to rely even partially on lotteries, it speaks to a failure within the system. I would focus on enrichment models at each of the schools to ensure that each school in D15 provides comparable outcomes across all subject matter first and foremost.

7) How would you have handled the reopening of schools for the 2020-2021 academic year? How would you prepare for a second wave of this pandemic? How would you propose to ensure that the needs of highly vulnerable children with special needs, who are homeless, come from poor families, and/or live in households without adults who could aid their learning are not left further behind when remote learning has to be relied on?



Our children are suffering the most from all of this. From the beginning, there was no communication with parents and families, and for months there was no discussion of how we safely re-open schools. The worst hit are students of color across the city, those from low-income households and those experiencing homelessness. When schools were most recently re-opened, only those who had opted in for in-person instruction at the start of the year were able to return - and countless more parents who could have sent students in decided to not send their students in and rely instead on remote learning despite being ill prepared by the DOE. I would have instituted a plan which allowed for students to return to school at the start of the year and does not lock children out as the city did this school year. Mental health plays a critical role. Before our children are ready to learn, we will need to address the mental health needs of each and every student. From there, we build individual learning plans tailored to the needs of each of our 1.1 million students to ensure their education resumes without interference. This should also be an opportunity for identifying the flaws with remote learning and ensuring we have the bandwidth for remote learning at all times. DOE dedicates a substantial budget to tech, yet months after the fact, we still had students without devices. I would also work with edutainment companies in the private sector to support our school system's needs as we develop a 21st century learning framework.

8) Do you support allowing non-citizen New York City residents to vote in City-based elections? Why or why not?

The way in which we conduct our elections needs to be revisited. I am not opposed to having resident green card holders vote if they pay local taxes. Immigrants in New York, particularly legal immigrants, pay a significant proportion of our taxes. I am also for open primaries.

9) Do you support any campaign finance reforms for NYC? If so, please describe.

I believe that the Campaign Finance Board should consider introducing democracy vouchers to give people vouchers to be able to financially support candidates. We also need to examine the Board of Elections, as recent elections have shown us that there are glaring issues within that system.

10) Now that the State government has passed the Reproductive Health Act, what steps would you have the Council and City Hall take to increase reproductive healthcare access, including maternal healthcare, and to do so equitably?

I would work with the Council and experts in healthcare and reproductive health to ensure that reproductive health resources are available to all New York City residents, including communities which suffer the worst rates of lethal maternal mortality outcomes.

11) The MTA is facing a significant revenue shortfall and many parts of the city lack access to reliable public transportation. What measures would you implement and/or enforce, to promote safe, efficient, and accessible transportation options for mass transit users, pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers in Brooklyn and in the City as a whole?

The MTA is a prime example of an issue which requires collaboration between the city, state, and federal government. I am not in the business of antagonizing the governor but I believe public transportation should be free. I would work with my colleagues in government to reduce the waste in public transportation and focus on programs which work, including the expansion of dedicated busways and streamlining our subway



system. There is no reason it should not be the model for the world. We also have seen an increase in bicycle traffic, but the city has failed to keep up with building the necessary bike infrastructure to include protected bike lanes and bike parking despite seeing increasing pedestrian/cyclist fatalities on our streets. The Mayor and Department of Transportation need to get serious about street safety and roll out the required infrastructure to encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation.

12) How would you ensure fairness in employment, salary, workplace conditions, and promotion? What is your position on strengthening and increasing access to union membership?

I believe in the need for robust labor laws and workplace protections and would work with the respective Mayor's offices to ensure fairness in employment, salary, workplace conditions and promotions across the public sector. I believe every person has the right to organize if they so desire, and if it is the consensus of the majority of employees, that they have the right to petition their employer to that end. In construction, for example, where the stakes are so high - life and death - union labor has translated to better trained workers, work protections, and safer worksites across the board. I welcome the opportunity to speak with all labor groups regarding union membership.

13) How would you ensure that underserved communities receive fair and equitable treatment from city government? What policies do you support that would level the playing field for historically marginalized groups?

I would focus our unified task force on providing outreach to the most vulnerable parts of our city. I would work with community based organizations in heavily impacted and impoverished neighborhoods and public housing developments to ensure all New Yorkers have access. My administration would work with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to ensure that all New Yorkers have equal and equitable access to government resources and services.

14) What policy and practice changes are needed for NYC government to ensure sufficient quality housing that actually is affordable for existing residents in Brooklyn neighborhoods?

New York City must first and foremost protect our existing rent-regulated housing. Some of it is in our face. There should be no reason why landlords are collecting market rate on rent-controlled units used as family shelter sites. I would pass legislation requiring a stringent audit of all such units and work with DHCR to pass legislation requiring the city to conduct due diligence to prevent the use of and loss of such rent-regulated units. My administration would also pass legislation requiring tiers of low-AMI units to shift from our model of market rate/100%+ AMI units marketed as affordable today. We also need to pivot away from the shelter industrial complex and work with the leading providers of supportive housing to ensure adequate units and mental health resources are available.

15) What policies would you pass or enforce to ensure public housing/NYCHA repair, upkeep and security, and access to alternate housing and services when lacking essentials such as heat, gas and hot water? What is your position on "privatization" of public housing/NYCHA, and on City government sale of public housing "open areas" (outdoor seating & recreation plots) and air rights to private developers?

I would work with my colleagues in the city, state and federal government to remove waste from NYCHA. Every year, unaddressed boiler issues mean families in any of the 334 developments (2,602 buildings) do not have heat or hot water in the winter. I will work to build a culture of customer service within NYCHA



which serves residents. The average tickets for NYCHA work orders should not span months and waste of resources on bandaied solutions such as patch jobs over unr-repaired leaks or lead paint. The RAD/PACT came about as a result of mismanagement, and it goes above the status quo. When speaking about privatization, I want to be clear that this is public housing and will remain public housing under my watch, but that I do not see RAD/PACT as privatization. Any disposition of public land must service and benefit the residents of public housing. If there is a mutual gain among parties to such a transaction, I would support this. I am interested in a model of legislation like that in the New York State Senate calling for a fund to be established to address NYCHA needs, but cannot support it at this time given that it falls short of residents' needs and the Tenant Associations need to be provided with the authority to study and review all such proposals.

16) Given the City's Covid and post-Covid economic crisis, how would you approach your role in addressing the city's carceral system, including the plan to close Rikers?

The City Council worked with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and groups leading the way - such as JustLeadership USA and the Lippman Commission - to close Rikers and made that a reality. I support closing Rikers and borough based facilities, however I do not support creating four mini-Rikers. It was not only a geographic problem - it is also about the culture within the NYC Department of Corrections. We do have a need for jails in New York City, but reducing the bed count to 3,300 was a milestone as not everyone who is in jail or comes into contact with the criminal justice system needs to be there. My mental health program would lead the way here starting with a focus on individualized trauma-informed approach to helping New Yorkers. I would empower diversion programs - especially mental health courts and pass legislation to support Kendra's Law which would use existing resources and not cost anything more than we are spending to help people avoid the system and find housing. My administration would also establish a public-private partnership with our jail facilities, the NYC Economic Development Corporation and our leading institutions to provide quality job training and opportunities to ensure that once people leave jail, they are never put in a position to return.

16) Describe your vision for public safety in New York City? What, if any, functions would you like to see removed from the police department? What agencies assume the functions removed from the NYPD?

We need our police. The problem is myopic vision and a lack of leadership. We do need to hold police accountable. In the military, we have strict accountability under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which sets standards in environments as chaotic as war - and with real consequences for violating them. It is indefensible that a police department tasked with protecting and serving our communities not uphold the same standards. We do not need a combative approach to policing, and when officers do violate the law, they need to be held accountable. We must enable our communities to have a say in their precinct commanders such as the 73rd Precinct did. We need to create accessible, robust and participatory Precinct Councils which are seen as neutral ground between community members and police and where they can vote to appoint the Commanding Officers of the respective Precinct. Our Precinct Council meetings should be livestreamed and enabled for virtual participation. We also ask our police to do too much. I will implement a core crisis management team capable of responding to all mental health emergencies, and which will lead such responses and cross-training across the city. Trained social workers and clinicians would respond to such calls. That said, we have community police officers which we need more of. The city created the NCO program in 2015 and most New Yorkers do not know they have two community police officers they can contact at any time who work to de-escalate conflict. Gun violence is a real problem in our city, and the communities most impacted have not called for less police. Public housing residents I speak with have



pointed out that they need more of a police presence because the tendency is for the shooting incidents to occur when police are not present. This means working with intervention groups like Brownsville In, Violence Out (BIVO), GMACC and Save our Streets to ensure they lead efforts on the ground to lessen the need for police involvement.

17) Do you support changes to the ULURP process and to other NYC zoning mechanisms? If so, what specific changes do you support?

I believe that our ULURP process is outdated. I propose a shift to the process which allows for equity in any and all rezoning decisions starting at the community board level and going up to City Planning and the City Council. New Yorkers are often given a false choice between a rezoning and an as-of-right project. We know our city planning is reactive and this is the heart of the problem. As a matter of fact, it does no "planning" - it just reacts. I would re-imagine the Department of City Planning and work with planning commissioners and experts to carve out a new program tasked with proactive studies and planning on a neighborhood level and citywide level so that we can lead the way towards smart, sustainable development and growth with the necessary infrastructure in place.

18) Do you have a plan to reduce and prevent homelessness in Brooklyn and NYC? Explain your plan.

New York City spends \$3.2B keeping people in shelters - not on keeping people out of shelters or getting them out of shelters and into permanent housing. We need to focus on mental health and building a robust mental health care system in this city. My administration will build strong community teams, develop a system to know each person experiencing homelessness by name and in real time and invest in smarter housing solutions. I will empower our Street to Home (S2H) teams to conduct real-time visits and to transport street homeless New Yorkers to safe-havens immediately and prioritize them for housing. We will embrace a comprehensive approach to substance abuse and rehabilitation, which is very much a mental health issue and will advance an abstinence-based program. On a granular level, we will also equip clinicians to provide assessments and follow up case management on the street to help assess individuals' needs. We will also use data and analytics to understand what's working and what is not and to help drive accountability. Our interagency task force will work to ensure that nobody is left homeless and that nobody has to sleep on the streets or subways.