

2021 Alexandria City Council Candidate Survey

The following questions are derived from the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce's 2021 Legislative Agenda. Through the Legislative Agenda, the Chamber has identified its priority action items for the next year and beyond.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. We encourage you to review the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce's 2021 Legislative Agenda as you prepare your answers.

Your answers will be made available to the Alexandria business community and other interested parties in whole and without edits. Please return the completed survey to Maria Ciarrocchi, mciaarocchi@thechamberalx.com by April 30, 2021.

We appreciate your cooperation.

1.INTRODUCTION -Please introduce yourself and describe why you are seeking a seat on the Alexandria City Council. For this question you are welcome to submit a brief video.

My name is Meronne Teklu -- I was born in Alexandria, raised in Northern Virginia and currently live in the West End. I was raised by two Ethiopian immigrant parents who instilled in me the value of hard work, education and giving back.

On Council, I will bring a data-driven but people-centered approach to create new opportunities in our community that keep our families here. I'm running for Alexandria City Council because this pandemic has disproportionately impacted our most historically vulnerable populations and I plan to advocate for solutions that create a livable Alexandria for all. Including amplifying the voices of our youth; innovating and co-creating technology solutions that are equitably distributed across Alexandria; supporting our small businesses in navigating the Covid-19 pandemic; as well as creating solutions for a transportation system that is accessible and affordable that can contribute to a healthier climate.

Through my day-to-day work I support solving complex problems and I will work to prioritize innovative solutions with the community. I hope to earn your vote for the June 8th Democratic Primary.

2.COVID-19 RECOVERY –Please share your thoughts on what economic recovery looks like for the City, particularly its businesses.

Economic recovery in the midst of COVID-19 has hit our business and particularly small businesses hard. It's important to have the current vaccine resources reach our communities in the most efficient and equitable way possible for our communities to have that peace in mind. An important component to this recovery is to continue to advocate for more funding in order to provide city-funded emergency grants to small businesses and put a moratorium on the interruption of utility services and evictions.

3.COVID-19 CHANGES –The City has relaxed a fair number of regulations to allow for businesses to operate under COVID-19 protocol. Which of these loosened restrictions would you like to see in perpetuity? Are there any you would like to roll back?

I would like to see us continue to provide options for our community to experience Alexandria restaurants from the comfort of their home, in addition to transitioning additional capacity to in-person dining as COVID-19 cases decline. With the rise of new food delivery and to-go applications such as Uber Eats, DoorDash, GrubHub, and others, it will be critical for our City to continue restaurant deliveries and pickup service. In addition, Alexandria's beautiful historic scenery is optimal for outdoor dining and we should consider continuing outdoor dining expansion.

4.EQUITY & INCLUSION -There is a broader conversation about equity in relation to COVID-19 as well as racial justice in response to recent events throughout the country. Alexandria demonstrated a commitment to advancing equity in its work with the addition of the Race and Social Equity Officer. As an elected leader, working in concert with the Race and Social Equity Officer, what ideas do you have to help Alexandria, particularly the business community, work towards being more inclusive?

Keeping equity as our north star as we work to make Alexandria more inclusive will be critical. A few ideas I have are around creating a shared database of minority owned business contact information, hosting cultural events at local restaurants that highlight the vibrancy of our diverse community, and supporting anti-racism training for Alexandria staff and businesses.

5.CITY ISSUES –What do you feel are the three (3) most pressing issues facing the City of Alexandria today?

1. Covid-19 Relief and Recovery
2. Economic and Business Support
3. Youth and Community Engagement

6.STATE AND REGIONAL ISSUES–What do you feel are the most pressing state and regional issues affecting Alexandria?

1. Affordable Housing
2. Environment and Sustainability
3. Equity and Racial Justice