

# **Newton Conservators**

## **2025 Newton Candidate Questionnaire**

**Respondent:** Martha H. Bixby

**Office Sought:** Ward 6 Ward Councilor

### **Question 1:**

What are your top 2 or 3 goals and/or objectives from the Newton Open Space Plan:2020-2027 (see pages 147-150 for the Plan's Goals and Objectives) and what do you plan to do to promote them? (FYI, a priority of Newton Conservators, relating to Objective 6C on page 150, is to complete overdue and future Conservation Restrictions in a timely manner.) Are there items that you believe are missing from either the open space plan or conservation discussions in our community, and how would you address that? (400 words or less)

### **Response:**

These are all important goals, and many if not all of them tie together. We can continue to work to achieve all of the goals by keeping the focus on our open spaces, letting residents know what is required to maintain, protect, and expand them, and involving residents and all parts of city government in this work.

In particular, improvements in following three goals would give us measurable outcomes that would encourage community support for our open spaces:

Goal 2: MAINTENANCE and IMPROVEMENT: Maintained and improved open space recreational resources (i.e., athletic fields, parks, playgrounds, trails, hard courts, off-leash areas, and other recreational facilities). Natural areas with intact native habitats, limited invasive species, maximized native plants, maintained or reestablished natural hydrology, and improved water quality. Optimized extent and health of the City's urban canopy.

Goal 3: ACCESSIBILITY: Maximized accessibility of as many of Newton's Outdoor Recreation Facilities and Natural Open Spaces as feasible.

Goal 4: MINIMIZED GAPS IN THE AVAILABILITY OF OPEN SPACE RESOURCES: New and improved open space resources in areas of greatest need including, but not limited to, Environmental Justice areas, areas affected by heat island effects, and areas lacking certain types of local open space resources.

**Question 2:**

The climate crisis is one of the biggest detrimental impacts on our open spaces. How would you accelerate or add to the actions recommended in both the Newton Climate Action Plan: A Living Plan for 2020-2025 (focused on reducing greenhouse gases) and the Newton Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Action Plan (focused on changes to protect natural resources and reduce effects of extreme weather events)? (400 words or less)

**Response:**

The City must work on all fronts on the actions recommended in the Newton Climate Action Plan because various of the actions will be available or of interest to individual residents and families at different times. Major or small renovations, implementing composting or reducing waste, choosing to bike, when purchasing a new vehicle choosing electric - these all happen for different people at different times. Having the City put infrastructure in place such as BERDO, bike lanes, electric vehicle charging, composting programs, and more, all allow residents to take the actions that work for them at the appropriate moment or a time that works for them.

There are a number of recent issues in front of the Council that involve climate vulnerability. We can and should use this moment to make progress on all of the important actions in the Climate Vulnerability and Action Plan.

This term I've been pleased to vote for progress on electrification, including BERDO. I have been honored to serve on the School Transportation Steering Group and to work to increase walking, biking, and shared rides to school and to promote increased bus use to reduce emissions. These and other environmental issues have been a main area of work over the past two years.

**Question 3:**

Do you believe current funding levels in the City budget are sufficient to maintain high quality open space and address growing climate mitigation needs? If not, what would you do about it? (400 words or less)

**Response:**

There is much more we could do with more resources. In order to do that, we need to take a few steps as a city to gain trust and find responsible ways to identify new funding sources.

These include:

- Increase understanding of and trust in how residents' tax dollars are spent
- Understanding where tax dollars are going and what trade-off and decisions are made
- Highlighting programs that give us great "bang for our buck"
- Finding ways to be even more fiscally responsible

- Increasing revenue including through smart and responsible new development, potential future prop 2.5 overrides, attracting commercial that could succeed here, and other opportunities

We can also be creative about learning from other communities. For example, travel sports parents see where fields are managed well. Avid hikers and fish enthusiasts might have examples of other natural spaces that are particularly well-managed in neighboring towns and cities. We can harness this knowledge, learn from other communities, and make Newton's open spaces even better!