

Sean Ryan

Affordable Housing

It is not the proper role of government to prioritize certain kinds of development. Government should not direct, subsidize, own, or administer housing. Whenever politicians try to solve the housing problem, they fail — because the only thing they can do is distort the market through various price controls and wealth redistribution measures. I agree — housing prices are too high. But the solution is not the use of force. The only way lastingly to lower the price of a good is either to increase the supply or to decrease the demand. The supply of units in Boston is artificially restricted due to archaic zoning regulations, restrictions on unit density, and a politicized development process (thanks to the BRA). We need to reject the idea of “public” housing, abolish the BRA, write sensible laws to protect the legitimate private property-based interests of abutters, and let the voluntary sector serve our needs as consumers of housing.

Development

As I said in #1, politicians should not have priorities as to what sorts of development should or should not occur — in a free society, it is only the people’s priorities that matter. I certainly wish that Jackson Square were a vibrant commercial intersection, seeing as it is accessible by T and is at the crossroads between two neighborhoods — but my view is that the best way to see development happen is to sell off all the government-owned or controlled land in the area, and let the market find uses that cater to the demands of consumers. If a developer determined that demand in that location made profitable a slim, 30-story rental apartment tower, where many younger folks could live more cheaply than in the downtown neighborhoods, then I would not be inclined to oppose it. Cities are supposed to grow — and the market is a better “planner” than any politician.

Environment and Energy

If it is cost-efficient (i.e. profitable, and therefore not requiring additional taxes), there is no reason why the city cannot at least make energy-saving upgrades to government-owned property. This could include building modernization and vehicle-sharing, or the use of alternative energy sources such as strategically placed wind turbines. All cost savings resulting from energy efficiency should be passed on to Boston residents through lowered taxes. Only proven technologies should be used — the city government should not be involved in the sort of speculative central planning that the Feds are currently engaged in. In the past, massive government efforts to solve society’s problems have usually not worked, and in many cases have had unintended negative consequences as well.

Youth Violence

Inner city violence can often be linked to drug activity. I advocate for an end to the “war on drugs,” for the decriminalization of recreational drugs like marijuana, and for a focus on treatment of addiction, rather than incarceration of non-violent offenders. Just as prohibition of alcohol in the 1920’s led to a marked rise in organized crime and violence, drug prohibition creates urban black market activity in which property disputes are settled by force, instead of by recourse to an arbitrator, the courts. Ceasing to enforce laws against private, non-violent activities will allow the police to focus on violent crime, and to spend more time walking beats and interacting with the community. As city councilor, I will hold hearings in all 11 police districts to bring together community leaders and police, so they can educate each other on actions that need to be taken to tamp down on violence.

Accountability and Transparency

I want to see all municipal expenses and salaries posted online, in an easily accessible, searchable, and downloadable format. I want every service-related request or phone call made to city hall to be given a unique ID number, and for the records of these requests to be made available in searchable format to public, with information on the nature of the request/complaint and the names of all municipal employees involved in handling it. I would like all city workers who carry communications equipment (such a DPW workers, for example) to be locatable in real-time through GPS technology, and for the public to be able to see, via the city website, the physical location of these workers, as well as their task assignment. The government works for us, after all!

Education

My priorities are to increase the variety and quality of educational options offered to parents — by lifting the cap on charter schools; and through the eventual introduction of a program of education credits under which parents have direct control over the money the city has allotted to their child. The amount of the credit would be determined by the per capita average spent on each child, according to the type of school (meaning that the credit would be higher for special needs children). Under this system, which has been tested successfully in countries such as Denmark, parents would be free to “opt out” of the system and bring their money to schools not controlled by the city. In this way, the city will have to compete for our business; innovation will be allowed to flourish; and failing schools will simply fail, while schools with proven performance will expand and take their place.

Human Services

This question falls outside my area of knowledge and expertise. Moreover, the City of Boston will not have the money with which to expand ANY services in the near future — so hypothetical thought exercises such as this one will probably have to wait for several years, at least. As the recession worsens, tax revenues will continue to fall, and we will have to do more with less money, both as individuals and as a community.

Transportation

The MBTA is a government monopoly coordinating all mass transit in the Boston area. Since monopolies, like governments, operate with little or no competition, they have little incentive to be responsive to the consumer. Since the MBTA transportation monopoly receives over \$750,000 each year out of state sales tax revenues, it is also able to operate continuously at a loss. Providing services at a loss is not a great long-term strategy — just ask our state government, which can't pay its bills; or the Feds, who borrow and print money like there's no tomorrow. Improved efficiency is really another way of saying improved profitability — the T needs to operate like a business, and pay its expenses out of the voluntary payments of riders. This will ensure that the T responds to the needs of those who consume their services.

Jobs and Labor

I do not think there is a single solution to this problem. It is not government's proper role to engage in social engineering or economic planning. When governments allocate money in order to "create" jobs for some people, they inevitably redirect money away from some other part of the economy, and thus merely redistribute employment, rather than increasing it. The most equitable system of economic organization, and the one that results in the largest and most rapid rise in the overall standard of living (for people of all ethnic and racial backgrounds), is capitalism. In order for capitalism to work, however, government interference must be kept to a minimum. If we want more jobs in the Boston area, we need lower taxes, sensible and business-friendly regulations, and bureaucrats who have the modesty to stay away from areas in which they have no expertise, lest they do more harm than good.

Race and Diversity

I do not believe in separating people into categories or groups based upon superficial characteristics such as skin color. I believe that the best for government to combat discrimination is to protect our personal and economic freedoms, and stay small. Self-interested voluntary-sector employers hire workers based on merit and qualifications. Employers that discriminate, and hire the less-qualified in order to exclude members of a certain group, will be outcompeted by those who don't. Government, since it has no profit incentive, is largely immune to these sorts of market forces, and may discriminate with impunity, making up the losses through higher taxes — but this is a deficiency of government, not the free market. In the long term, the race question — in all its many facets — will not be resolved by resorting to force, not even that of a majority. Love can only be voluntary.

Budget Policy

If by a "progressive" revenue policy, you mean one that deliberately redistributes wealth to those whom politicians have decided deserve or are entitled to it — such as a large underclass whom the government has conditioned to depend on involuntary charity; large, corrupt banks and corporations; and favored industries for whom the government is the only or

principle buyer (the military industrial complex and health care industry) — then I do not support such a policy. I reject all forms of collectivism, including Marxism, as affronts to individual rights (plank #2 of the Communist Manifesto refers to this issue). If I were allowed to make cuts to the budgets of two city departments, I would abolish the BRA (even though it's technically "off budget," which I believe is criminal, since it's a governmental organization over whom we lack the power of the purse) and phase out centralized control of public schools, by returning to the neighborhood model.

Lightning Round

I support all voluntary associations that do not attempt to use force (or the threat of force) to achieve their shared ends. I support the right for workers to unionize, but also for any worker to be allowed the choice of opting-out of union membership. No person should be forced to join a union, and unions should not control entire industries, forming a virtual monopoly on labor. There are several parties to all productive activities, and at least two to every economic transaction. Monopoly labor is just as unfair as monopoly land or monopoly capital — and when any of these monopolies exist (or if they team up to REALLY inhibit competition), the rest of society (the consumers) lose, due to artificially high prices for goods and services. Government — it should be remembered — is by definition a monopoly, which is why I feel so strongly about governmental entities having to ask us for their spending money.

I do not support the death penalty. Judges and juries, like all human beings, are fallible and have access only to imperfect knowledge — they are therefore unqualified to make a decision regarding the termination of a human life.

I support marriage equality for all. I believe that the best strategy for this is to take government out of marriage altogether. Government should enforce ALL voluntary contracts, as long as they are approved by a local justice of the peace or notary.

I do not support "anti-discrimination" laws. I do not believe that force can solve social problems, or that government can change what is in a man's heart. However, government should not categorize individuals as members of groups and should not deny services based on such categorizations. Where services are provided by government, they need to be available to all citizens. We are all human beings.

I believe that family planning is a personal issue, to be handled by women and their families. If government is to have a say at all, it should certainly not be at the Federal level.

I support abolishing the state income tax altogether. Taxes should be tailored as closely as possible to serve those individuals who are paying them, and should be levied at the municipal level for services. A simple poll tax would probably be sufficient for state expenses, if it did only what it was supposed to do. The Feds could pay for their constitutionally-sanctioned activities by levying a uniform tariff (which would not hinder market forces, if all other governments adopted similar systems and gold were used as a common currency).