



Humane USA – Massachusetts PAC

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Candidate Questionnaire

Boston City Council

Suzanne Lee

Candidate Name

Signature

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The treatment of animals in our society and in our city is critically important to many voters. Humane USA-Massachusetts Political Action Committee seeks to learn candidates' positions on issues relating to animals that may come before the Boston City Council and on which councilors may have an impact. We will use this survey as part of the basis for our endorsement of a candidate.

Issues:

Dog Runs: Designated off-leash recreation areas for dogs are an opportunity for recreation for both dogs and their guardians. Do you support the idea of fenced dog runs in public parks where space and conditions make it appropriate?

Yes No. Please explain:

In a City like Boston, it is extremely important that dogs have a place to go to run around and play and not be confined in a small apartment all day. These opportunities also provide for a great way for Boston's citizens to meet other like minded pet owners. I believe that the Peter's Park Dog Run, as well as the South Boston Bark Park are great dog parks in the District that offer much needed freedom and exercise for dogs as well as allow people to come together and meet their neighbors.

Breed Specific Regulations: The city currently has a breed-specific ordinance in place that is geared toward pit bull-type dogs and any mix of a pit bull-type dog. Many experts contend that ordinances that focus on specific breeds are not effective, unfair and create enforcement problems and focusing on dangerous dogs (regardless of breed) is more effective. Would you support an alternative to the breed-specific ordinance that focuses on dangerous dogs and not certain breeds?

Yes No. Please explain:

I believe that focusing on every dog of a specific breed is not only unfair but logistically difficult to enforce. There can be dangerous dogs of a wide variety of breeds and concentrating subjectively on these specific dangerous dogs makes more sense than dealing with any and all pit-bull and pit-bull mixes. I also believe that ordinances like these only further the public perception that pit-bulls are all dangerous and violent. Some of the sweetest and most well behaved dogs I have known are pit-bulls and the stigma that society has created with this breed is unfair. I believe helping educate people that certain breeds aren't all dangerous is an important step that we must take in Boston.

Animal Control: Animal control plays an important role in municipalities by not only protecting public safety, but by ensuring humane care for the animals in the City's care and control and in its animal shelter. Do you support appropriate funding for the City's animal control function and city animal shelter?

Yes No. Please explain:

Boston must continue to fund its animal control and animal shelter programs. These programs are critical in helping reduce overpopulation through spay and neuter programs, saving animals lives through proper handling, rescue and sanitation services, and helping find loving homes for animals through adoption.

Tethering dogs: More and more municipalities are considering ordinances that restrict the amount of time a dog can be tethered outside. A dog kept chained in one spot for hours, days, months, or even years suffers immense psychological damage. An otherwise friendly and docile dog, when kept continuously chained, becomes neurotic, unhappy, anxious, and often aggressive. Would you support such an ordinance in Boston?

Yes No. Please explain:

Absolutely. Boston must prevent animal cruelty in all forms - even when it might not seem like cruelty to the average person. Dogs living in a big city need to be allowed to run around, and move around. Staying locked up in their crate all day, or being tethered in the backyard for hours upon end will have great negative effects on these dogs. We also need to do a better job of educating the general public as to what can be seen as animal cruelty, especially things that the average person wouldn't recognize as such. This will help increase whether these actions are reported or not.

Wild animals in circuses: The complex needs of wild animals cannot be met when they are kept as part of a traveling entertainment show. In addition to problems involving housing, transport, nutrition, restraint, and training, animals confined in these shows suffer because they do not have an opportunity to satisfy their behavioral needs, including the need for social interaction with members of their own species. In order the control and dominate elephants, the bullhook (a stick with a sharp pointed end)

is used. In addition, the behavior of wild animals placed in situations unnatural to them may cause them to act unpredictably, creating potentially dangerous situations for circus employees, spectators, the general public, and the animals themselves. Quincy, Revere, Provincetown, Braintree and Weymouth have local ordinances that ban circuses that use wild animals from performing in their town.

Would you support an ordinance that would prohibit certain -- or all -- wild animals from performing in traveling animal shows in Boston?

Yes No. Please explain:

We, as a city, must take the moral high ground on such an important issue. It is ridiculous to place entertainment value ahead of cruelty and unfair treatment of wild animals. The fact that other cities and towns have moved forward with local ordinances banning circuses that travel with wild animals, shows that Boston needs to join the fold and prove that we are still the City that leads Massachusetts in progressive values and forward thinking. I would absolutely support an ordinance prohibiting these sorts of shows and circuses in the City of Boston.

Would you support an ordinance that would prohibit the use of the bullhook on elephants who are performing in Boston?

Yes No. Please explain:

First of all, as I just noted, I would support an ordinance that would prevent traveling shows featuring wild elephants from even performing in Boston. However, if the council wouldn't support such an ordinance, I think that an ordinance prohibiting the use of bullhook, as well as seeking to protect these animals from any and all other forms of cruelty would be an important step in the right direction.

Background:

What actions have you taken in either your public or private life that affect the welfare of animals?

While I was principal of the Harriet Baldwin School in Brighton, I partnered with the Humane society in a reading program for the children in the school. Humane Society employees and members would come provide books and read to the children to teach them the importance of pet ownership, animal welfare and humane treatment.

As a teacher and principal for over 35 years, I know that educating our children during their young and formative years is essential in ensuring that they grow up to be respectful for the welfare of animals. As city councilor, I would be honored to work with

the Humane Society to help bring them together with our local schools - just as I did at the Baldwin school - to teach our kids the values of pet ownership and the importance of humane treatment of animals.

Are there any policies or programs affecting animals that you would like to address as a Boston City Councilor?

As a City Councilor, I would always work to promote responsible pet ownership and to reduce pet overpopulation through public education in our schools and in our communities, city ordinances, and support and funding for spaying and neutering programs. I will also help promote adoption from shelters and rescues and work with the Humane Society on initiatives that seek to end the mass breeding of dogs in puppy mills and their sale in pet stores and on the Internet.

I would work diligently to continue funding for pet friendly green spaces, fenced in dog runs, and better routes to get to these areas that don't involve crossing major roads and traffic. For instance the South Boston Bark Park requires owners to cross a major street with no cross walk nearby and I believe we need to make sure there is a cross walk that allows dog owners to safely cross the road right at the dog park.

I strongly feel that making sure Boston is a pet friendly city is extraordinarily important - especially as so many new young residents settle down here. In the South End I meet dog owners everyday who are happy that they have off leash areas, but still believe we can do better - like making sure bags and receptacles are readily available for them to clean up after their dog, and continuing to make sure that there are plenty of dog friendly places for them to visit. South Boston also has a very large population of dog owners and many residents do complain about owners not picking up after their dog. I think making bags and trash receptacles more accessible is a major area that not only District 2 can improve on, but the entire City as well. Beyond this, I believe that it is very important that we continue to listen to our neighbors and have a proactive dialogue with pet owners, including the newly organized South End Dog Committee, to hear their concerns and help to deal with issues before they become problems.

Have animals or an individual animal had any significant impact on your life?

When my son Kenji was young, my husband and I got him a cat to help teach him responsibility. Our cat Judy was a very important part of my son's formative years as well as a valued member of our family. I believe that having a pet helped Kenji learn to care for animals, and treat them kindly and patiently, which gave him invaluable training in learning to treat people the same way.

As a teacher, I know that children raised with pets can receive many benefits from this relationship. Developing positive feelings about pets can contribute to a child's self-

esteem and self-confidence. Positive relationships with pets aid in the development of trusting relationships with others. A good relationship with a pet can also help in developing non-verbal communication, compassion, and empathy. Pets can help develop responsible behavior in the children who care for them and can teach these children respect for other living things, loyalty, and affection, and eventually also help give them experience with loss when they get lost or pass away. I believe getting a cat while my son was young absolutely helped him with each of these things and I regularly recommend to parents with young children that they consider getting a pet.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return it to:

info@humanemass.org or Kara.Holmquist@gmail.com

or

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