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## 2021 Environmental Questionnaire for New York City Candidates

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the New York League of Conservation Voters Questionnaire.

To ensure your responses address the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please consult [NYLCV's 2021 New York City Policy Agenda](#) when answering the questions.

The New York League of Conservation Voters is the only non-partisan, statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy, and open space through political action. This questionnaire is designed to elicit your views regarding what environmental, public health, clean energy and transit, and environmental justice groups consider to be the most important issues of the day. Responses may inform NYLCV's educational and legislative programs and actions NYLCV takes in the election cycle.

Responses should be considered public. Although NYLCV may choose not to publicize the responses to every question, verbatim responses may be reproduced and distributed publicly. If so, your responses may be shortened, if necessary, but will not be edited in substantive ways. If you choose to refer us to a position paper or website, please indicate exactly what text you would like us to cite. For candidates choosing not to respond to the questionnaire, NYLCV will note as much in its public materials.

NYLCV and its partners in the environmental policy arena believe that New York's voters are determined to make the environment a voting issue this year. Candidate positions on issues such as protecting public health, building a clean energy future, and mitigating climate change will help voters decide how to cast their ballots this election cycle. This questionnaire is one of the primary ways the public will get this information.

Here are a few guidelines:

- ☒ Questionnaires are due **Friday, February 26, 2021**.
- ☒ The completed questionnaire is mandatory for endorsement consideration and must be submitted via e-mail as a Microsoft Word file to: [politics@nylcv.org](mailto:politics@nylcv.org)
- ☒ Questions or extension requests may be directed to Joshua Klainberg ([jklainberg@nylcv.org](mailto:jklainberg@nylcv.org))
- ☒ After receipt of the completed questionnaire, candidates will be invited to participate in a formal interview with a local Chapter Board.
- ☒ Candidate endorsements will be made by the NYLCV State Board on April 29, 2021.

## CAMPAIGN CONTACT INFORMATION

Candidate name: Austin Shafran

Office sought & district number: New York City Council District 19

Campaign e-mail: [info@austinshafran.com](mailto:info@austinshafran.com)

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Twitter handle: [@austinshafran](https://twitter.com/austinshafran)

Campaign manager's name and email: Kelly Barr, [kelly@austinshafran.com](mailto:kelly@austinshafran.com)

Press Secretary's name and email: N/A - same

Scheduler's name and email: N/A - same

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please share your accomplishments or experiences that indicate your commitment to advancing a pro-environment agenda. These experiences may be professional or personal.

In the past year I helped lead coalition efforts with multiple environmental advocacy organizations to help pass the historic Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) to achieve carbon-free electricity by 2040 and a net-zero carbon economy by 2050. And I worked with green energy advocacy groups such as the New York Communities for Change, the NY League of Conservation Voters, Sierra Club, the NRDC, the NY Offshore Wind Alliance, and other advocacy organizations to create and run a coalition campaign – WindWorks LI - in support of the state's first/largest offshore wind development projects (South Fork Wind, Sunrise Wind). I have also worked with these same groups on a series of ambitious clean energy policies including the creation of a new coalition campaign - Carbon Free NY – to push for the enactment of a carbon pricing plan through the NY Independent System Operator (NYISO). In addition to these offshore wind and carbon pricing campaigns I've helped run, I've also worked on various electrification, decarbonization, fossil fuel pension fund divestment and other environmental advocacy efforts with a broad array of the state's leading environmental groups including NYLCV. I was proud to be at the center of the debate that will define our generation and the fate of those to come and would use that experience to shape environmental policies coming out of the Council.

## ISSUES

Each year, NYLCV works closely with New York's leading environmental, public health, conservation, energy, environmental justice, and transportation organizations to identify the most pressing priorities on fighting climate change, conserving land and water, and protecting public health. These issues drive NYLCV's advocacy work throughout the legislative session, influence the bills we select for NYLCV's Environmental Scorecards, and informs the decision on the candidates we choose to endorse. To ensure your responses are in alignment with the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please review [NYLCV's 2021 New York City Policy Agenda](#) when formulating your responses.

Please indicate your level of commitment to, and if applicable your recent personal and professional activity concerning, all the policy priorities of our partners per the following issues:

### Top Priorities

Transportation isn't only the number one source of greenhouse gas emissions in our state—it is also a major source of air pollution, causing respiratory and other public health issues. This is particularly the case near New York City's many major highways where too often, these communities are low-income and communities of color.

#### 2. Encouraging the Shift to High Efficiency, Low Emission Forms of Transportation (p. 3)

I'm 100% committed to shifting to high efficiency, low emissions forms of transportation, including:

- Requiring the City to shift its fleet of city-owned vehicles to 100% zero-emission vehicles, as well as requiring the city to mandate conversion to EVs among contractor vehicles such as school buses.
- Supporting an overall reduction of the size of the city's fleet.
- Supporting congestion pricing in order to encourage the use of more efficient modes of transportation or cycling; and
- Supporting lower emission standards

More than ever, New Yorkers realized the value of our parks and open spaces in 2020 as our cultural institutions were closed and we had to practice social distancing. Open green space is one of the City's most valuable environmental assets but also contributes to the well-being of our residents and our economy.

#### 3. Conserving New York City's Parks and Natural Areas (p. 3)

I would fight for increased funding for parks and open space resources and the creation of more greenways connecting parks to each other such as the current proposed plans for a greenway from Flushing Meadows Corona Park through Kissena Park, Cunningham Park, Alley Pond Park and connecting to the Joe Michaels Mile along Little Neck Bay. As the father of two young children, I saw firsthand how valuable clean, open spaces are to our communities, especially our children. Without these areas our children would have suffered even more physical and psychological damage from COVID restrictions. I'm fully committed to being a champion for parks and open spaces and ensuring they are well funded especially in moments of crisis like now.

Reaching the City's Zero Waste goal by 2030 will require work from all New Yorkers—cooperation of city officials and private industry, and buy-in from the public. Stimulating behavioral change is critical

to meeting this goal, as is ensuring the City has programs in place that promote waste reduction, diversion, and sustainable waste management.

#### 4. Common Sense Waste Management (p. 3)

NYC has to become more efficient with how we manage our City's Waste. We need a concerted effort coordinating the public and private sectors while getting the public to buy in and change behavior along with practices. I fully support the City's Zero Waste goal by 2030, as well as the use of public education campaigns run by the city to raise awareness of waste issues and incentivize better behavior. I also support policies focused on reducing the use of single-use items especially plastic and the ban on plastic bags and straws.

#### Combating Climate Change

The time to act on climate is now. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report makes it clear that we must make radical changes in short order to avoid catastrophic climate change. We will work to advance policies that decrease emissions from all sectors, prepare us to meet the unavoidable impacts of climate change, reduce waste, and foster a strong green economy. We must also ensure the changes we make to tackle climate change benefit disadvantaged communities and provide for a just transition.

#### 5. Energy and Infrastructure (p. 5)

Improving our existing infrastructure and building new infrastructure to help us fully transition to green energy is absolutely critical. I would support expanding investments to incentivize more clean energy retrofits and the generation, storage and use of solar power by residential buildings, similar to action the Council took with respect to commercial properties. I also support the "Renewable Rikers Act" to help create renewable energy on Rikers Island and move away from current wastewater treatment facilities that negatively impact communities of color and environmentally disadvantaged communities, while also helping NYC reach its 1,000MW solar capacity goal by 2030. From incentivizing residential and commercial construction and retrofits with tax credits to providing tax rebates for individuals that lower their carbon footprint and offering condo/co-op developments property tax incentives to convert to solar panels and other electrification of their infrastructure, there are numerous avenues the city can take as part of a more aggressive and incentive-laden approach to building clean energy infrastructure. The city also needs to invest in offshore wind development and clean energy transmission. All major ports, like in Brooklyn and the Bronx especially should become hubs for offshore wind development and energy transmission, while also moving to retire peaker plants and incentivize their retrofitting into clean energy (solar, wind, electric) substations. I also existing laws, like Climate Mobilization Act, and look forward to continuing this progress

#### 6. Transportation (p. 5)

I fully support efforts to get New Yorkers to utilize low to no emission methods of transportation whether it be public transportation, cycling, commercial and personal EV use and other forms of micromobility such as electric scooters. I support expansions of bike lanes throughout the city with community input and proper environmental, transportation and community review to ensure they're located in appropriate areas that are safe for pedestrians and cyclists. And I will continue to advocate for improvements and expansions to our subway system and our bus routes especially express bus service and shuttles in transportation desserts like Northeast Queens.

#### 7. Resiliency (p. 6)

We need to create a full citywide resiliency plan which includes all areas within the five boroughs and pays special attention to our coastal areas. Each area should have its own plan as part of the broader master plan. I believe that the city should invest more in climate resiliency, specifically in offshore and

onshore wind development and siting, renewable energy retrofits, expanded carbon emissions reduction standards for residential buildings (to match new commercial building standards the Council recently passed) and waterfront erosion protection measures such as the use of natural Oyster reefs that help with water filtration, improve marine habitability and protect against beach erosion. We have to be proactive about building necessary resiliency infrastructure and prioritize frontline communities.

#### 8. Solid Waste (p. 7)

I support large scale public education programs focused on recycling and a series of incentives plus stronger deterrents for commercial/residential waste management. We should expand programs that encourage the public to be more mindful and to buy in reducing our solid waste in order to make the way that we process our waste as efficient and green as possible.

### Protecting People and Natural Resources

All New Yorkers deserve indoor and outdoor environments that are free of contamination and pollution. We will promote policies that provide access to healthy air and water, protect our open spaces, and improve the well-being of all New Yorkers.

#### 9. Parks, Natural Areas, and Active Waterfronts (p. 9)

I'm fully committed to protecting our city's parks, waterfronts and natural areas. I'm supportive of utilizing our active waterfronts as resiliency infrastructure and support protecting funding for our open spaces and will be a strong advocate for our parks, as well as the creation of new greenways connecting parks/open spaces across districts.

#### 10. Lead Poisoning Prevention (p. 9)

I support empowering and mandating DOHMH to conduct full and thorough investigations when minors have test results which show elevated blood lead levels. I also support proactive methods in order to protect children, families, and workers from getting lead poisoning including more public education, testing and stricter fines on building owners including loss of property and independent receiverships for building owners that fail to abide by the set standards.

#### 11. Reduce and Mitigate Heat Vulnerability (p. 9 – 10)

Each year gets warmer and warmer due to the effects of climate change. Extreme weather events, heat alerts, rising water levels, floods and tree damage have rocked our neighborhoods and are all clearly a result of climate change. We need to increase funding for the Cool Neighborhoods program. I also support maintaining and expanding our vital urban forest, which provides necessary relief from extreme and dangerous heat.

#### 12. Clean Air for All (p. 10)

I support making city's fleet 100% electrified by 2040, including school buses, as well as incentivizing EV use in all city contractors with vendors – the city should make it a requirement of a concession contract that a vendor shift to EV in order to have their contracts renewed. We also need to reduce traffic and congestion which attribute so much emissions into our air supply by redesigning delivery schedules to have night-time off-hour deliveries to cut down on traffic congestion during the day.

#### 13. Clean Water for All (p.11)



We must ensure our water supply is clean, safe, and secure for years to come. I support empowering agencies such as DEP to conduct more studies and to regularly monitor our water supply. And I support Green Infrastructure programs designed to ensure fresh and clean drinking water.

#### 14. Sustainable Food Systems (p. 11)

I support programs such as SNAP, FRESH, GrowNYC and would like to see them expanded and red-lined into the city budget so there isn't a yearly fight over restoration of cuts. I also completely support expanding the number of NYC public schools which provide educational programs focused around both healthy and sustainable eating.