

[Staple business card here]

Bay State Cities Project
Department of Political Science
Tufts University

CITY COUNCILLOR INTERVIEW FORM

Date:

Interview Subject:

City's Election Cycle [year of next or last city council election]:

Phone #:

Email address from business card:

Interviewer: Robin__ Jessie__

Comments on quality of interview. (If typical, you need not put anything here. But if subject is uncooperative, evasive, especially helpful, note here *briefly*.)

Names of organizations/individuals he mentioned (or suggested) that we might want to talk to. When he/she mentions the name of an organization, make sure you get the name of an individual to talk with. If a phone number is offered, include it here. If your write-up does not indicate what kind of organization each is, note that here:

[Hand business card at opening; take offered card in return]

Thank you so much for taking time from your busy day to speak with me. As I think I said to you on the phone, our research team at Tufts is conducting a project on city government. We're interviewing officials from eight different cities from eastern Massachusetts in the hopes of better understanding policymaking and urban government.

[NOTE: If respondent asks you, which are the cities, it's ok to list them: Boston, Worcester, Lynn, Somerville, Cambridge, Arlington, Brookline, and Newton]

[NOTE: If respondent asks why we picked his/her city, your response should be something like: "There were a number of factors, but the principal that guided us was to choose a set of cities that were diverse from each other in terms of the socioeconomic status of the residents]

By way of introduction let me also emphasize that this conversation is only for research purposes. In our papers and articles we'll never quote you by name or identify you in any way. Everything is confidential.

Q1 Let me begin by asking you a little bit about yourself. Tell me about your career background and how you eventually ended up on the city council?

IF THE SUBJECT IS UNCLEAR OR AMBIGUOUS (I.E., "I AM A LAWYER BY BACKGROUND), ASK FOR A LITTLE MORE DETAIL (I.E., "TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT YOU DID THERE")

IF THE SUBJECT DOESN'T MENTION THE DATE: I'm not sure I got down the date of your first election to the city council?

Q2 I want to jump forward from your first election to the present. Tell me about the issue you've been spending the most time this past month. If you could, tell me the story of that issue.

PROBE [We want to get the story here, with at least some detail, so that we can determine if there were any interest groups involved, so if their description is very brief, probe for more by picking out something in what they did say and encourage them to talk more. As with, "Interesting. I was curious, for example, that you mentioned that Jones got involved by accident, but Smith had been working all along on it. Could you elaborate?" Or some such.]

PROBE[If they don't include this information, follow-up with:] And how did that issue come on to the attention of the city council? Where did it come from?

You're going to ask either 3a or 3b.

EITHER:

3a-1 As you told the story, you mentioned [name of organization(s)], which is/are involved on this issue. Could you tell me a little bit more about their role in all of this?

3a-2 What other nongovernmental organizations were involved in this issue?

IF NECESSARY, PROBE FOR THEIR ROLE.

OR, IF NO GROUPS WERE MENTIONED

3b-1 Were there any organizations from outside of government, from the nonprofit, business, or labor, sectors were involved in this issue?

3b-2 **[If not clear from above]** And could you tell me a little about their role in all of this?

You'll ask either 4a or 4b:

Q4a-1 IF THE RESPONDENT'S ACCOUNT OF HIS/HER ELECTION IN #1 WAS THEIR FIRST AND MOST RECENT ELECTION: If I could I'd like to return to that first election you spoke of just a few minutes ago. You mentioned some organizations/an organization that helped in your race for the city council. I wonder if you could expand on what you said and describe the kinds of assistance they provided to you: campaign workers, phone calls—what did they do to help?

PROBE IF THEY MENTIONED ONLY ONE OR TWO

ORGANIZATIONS: Were there other organizations that helped or was that pretty much it?

Q4a-2 ALTERNATIVE: IF THEY DIDN'T MENTION ANY ORGANIZATIONS: If I could I'd like to return to that first election you spoke of just a few minutes ago. Were there any nongovernmental organizations—civic groups, business, nonprofits, labor, political organizations—that provided assistance to you in that election?

PROBE IF NECESSARY: I wonder if you could expand on what you said and describe the kinds of assistance they provided to you: campaign workers, phone calls—what did they do to help?

OR IF THERE WAS A MORE RECENT ELECTION THAN THEIR FIRST:

4b Earlier you talked about your first election. I'd like to move forward in time to your most recent election. Could you describe that campaign and describe your coalition of supporters?

PROBE IF NECESSARY: You mentioned some organizations, like the [name of organization(s)]. Could I get you to expand on how they helped you? What kind of assistance did they provide to you in the last election?

PROBE IF THEY DIDN'T MENTION ANY SPECIFIC

ORGANIZATIONS: You mentioned your coalition but I'm not clear as to whether there were any organizations that were actively working on your behalf, or was it just people like [name a constituency that he/she identified] that came to work on your behalf?

Q5 Whether they supported you or not, what are the organizations that you hear from most in your work here on the council—the organizations that most frequently come to you to ask for help, to lobby you, give you studies or memos, or just to keep in touch?

ONLY ASK THIS QUESTION, Q6, IF THE ISSUE DISCUSSED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION #2 DOES NOT HAVE TO DO WITH THE ENVIRONMENT. (WE'RE DEFINING THE ENVIRONMENT BROADLY HERE, SO IF THE ISSUE IN Q #2 SEEMS REMOTELY CONNECTED TO THE ENVIRONMENT, DON'T ASK THIS QUESTION.

Q6 One area we've been asking about is the environment as such issues are often controversial in city government. Is there an issue related to the environment that you've been involved with recently?

[If they say yes but don't proceed to tell you much, probe, something like:] That's interesting, what you said about X, Y or Z. Tell me a little more about that:

You're going to ask either 6a or 6b

6a-1. As you told the story, you mentioned [name of organization(s)], which were involved on this issue. Could you tell me a little bit more about their role?

6a-2. Were there other nongovernmental organizations were involved in this issue?

OR, IF NO GROUPS WERE MENTIONED IN 5

6b-1. Were there any organizations from outside of government that were involved in this issue?

6b-2 [If not clear from above] Could you tell me a little about how they were involved?

Q7 Thinking about the whole rest of the council rather than yourself, who would you think are the nongovernmental organizations that most frequently meet with your colleagues?

Q8 Are there any organizations that you've found frustrating to work with? Organizations that try to block what you want, or they somehow work at cross-purposes to your efforts?

PROBE [If not clear from their answers] what is it that gives these groups what influence they have?

Q-LAST We've covered a lot of ground. Is there something I should be asking. If you were sitting in my seat, what would you be asking?

Q-Help [NOTE: MAKE SURE WHEN YOU'RE PINNING DOWN NAMES, THAT THOSE NAMES ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE ACTIVISTS IN AN ORGANIZATION THAT OPERATES IN THE CITY. OK IF IT'S AN ORGANIZATION THAT WORKS IN MORE THAN ONE CITY.] That just about wraps things up. If I could ask for your help on one thing, though. As we spoke you mentioned some organizations that you interacted with. We're going to follow up and try to do brief phone interviews with one representative of each group we hear about. [Here distinguish between organizations where he/she mentioned a person, and those that he/she didn't.] Could you give me the name of someone at the [organizations where he/she didn't give you a name].

Let me make sure I have the names right for [list names mentioned earlier; probe if its not clear how you get a hold of them; nonprofits might be run out of someone's home. Businesses, business associations, and unions should be easy to find.]

That's it. Thanks so much. [Close your folder and put away your pen in a very obvious fashion, indicating that you really are done. Then:] Maybe I should ask if there's something I should have been asking you?

[Do not take notes, leave notebook closed even if they talk about something directly relevant]

[Linger at door if comfortable; small talk might be revealing at this point]

[IF THERE IS AN ELECTION COMING UP BY 2006, YOU CAN ASK SOMETHING LIKE, "HOW DOES THE NEXT ELECTION LOOK?]

[When you finally do leave, *immediately* write up any comments they made after your notebook was closed; *immediately* write up all other comments using the notes you took as a guide.]