**SAMPLE TOPICS AND QUESTIONS TO POSE TO LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATES**

Note: These are only suggestions. You may have others that are specific to your city or town.

### STRONG LOCAL-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

The pandemic years demonstrated the importance of a strong partnership between local, state, and federal governments. In fact, they showed the success that can be achieved when governments work together to address seemingly intractable problems, especially when each level works from its strengths.

**What will you do to grow those partnerships and provide flexibility so municipalities can effectively respond to unforeseen developments (such as pandemics) and deliver necessary services to their citizens?**

Municipal governance charters allow towns to be both innovative and nimble in addressing problems that may be too big for the state government to untangle. **Do you support allowing municipal governance charters to take effect upon final adoption by the voters, without action from the General Assembly?**

**How will you ensure that the legislature fully funds programs it mandates so as not to further burden the property tax or shift costs to local governments?**

### Housing

Lack of housing options — to move the homeless into permanent housing, to have more affordable and middle income homes, and to house those moving to Vermont to fill jobs — is a crisis on every level.

**What will you do to assure that a range of owned and rental housing choices is available to Vermonters at reasonable costs throughout the state?**

### Transportation

Municipalities maintain 13,000 of Vermont’s total 15,804 highway miles. Costs to towns for general highway obligations, such as the Municipal Roads General Permit and general maintenance, are imposed on towns without sufficient funding sources. Discretionary programs that advance state goals of compact settlement, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, vibrant downtowns, and welcoming safe streetscapes are out of reach for many communities due to scarce financing.

**How will you ensure municipalities receive an appropriate share of any new transportation dollars to fund mandated municipal highway projects and to encourage adoption of innovative measures such as EV charging stations and Complete Streets?**

### Tax Burden

Vermont’s state and local tax burdens are consistently among the highest in the nation. Property values are escalating at an alarming rate and threatening Vermonters’ ability to remain in their homes and communities. Moreover, between 70 and 90 percent of any town’s property tax bill is directed toward education, leaving little room for municipalities to carry out the core functions and responsibilities of local government.

**What will you do to reduce the overall tax burden on Vermonters?**

**How will you stop the shift of mandated program costs to the over-burdened property tax?**

**Will you support extending authority to adopt local option taxes to all cities and towns, thus relieving pressure on the overburdened property tax?**

**Will you support moving education homestead taxes wholly to an income-based system?**

### Stormwater and Wastewater

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for Lake Champlain in 2016 and Lake Memphremagog in 2017. It is considering a TMDL for the Connecticut River. Costs for mandated water quality improvement projects are in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

**How do you propose that Vermonters pay for these programs on an ongoing basis and how much should municipalities pay for them?**

**How will you evaluate the effectiveness of stormwater management and other water quality mandates in cleaning up the waters of the state?**

### PUBLIC SAFETY

Law Enforcement, dispatch, and emergency medical service providers are finding it tremendously difficult to recruit, train, or retain essential staff. Municipal departments around the state are understaffed. **What will you do to assure that Vermont’s public safety needs are met?**