

Think Globally, Act Locally feat. Jack Lovett

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Tommy: Welcome back to another episode of “Northeastern Next.” On today's episode, we have Jack Lovett, an office engineer for the City of Newton and member of the Northeastern Young Alumni Advisory Board. Today, we'll discuss his love for local government, giving back to the Northeastern community, and why young alumni should consider joining YAAB. Let's get into it.

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Tommy: Alright, hello Jack. Thank you for joining me today on this episode of “Northeastern Next.” We're really excited to have you.

Jack: Absolutely, thanks for having me, Tommy.

Tommy: Yeah, of course. I guess, why don't we jump right into it? I know you personally. I've met you a handful of times. I think the first time I met you was at the Experience Campaign back in October of 2022 at the Cabot Center.

Jack: That's right.

Tommy: And then we ran into each other again at commencement at Fenway last year. So...

Jack: Yes.

Tommy: I appreciate you jumping on the call, and it's always a great time crossing paths with you. But obviously, I know you, but the audience doesn't know you. So, do you mind giving us a little bit of background on both yourself and your Northeastern experience?

Jack: Sure, yeah. So, buddy, I was at Northeastern for what felt like forever, but not in a bad way. So, I grew up in the suburbs of Massachusetts in Newton, and I attended, I was at Northeastern actually for seven years. First, I was an undergraduate student for five years, 2014 to 2019. I was a political science and history double major, did three co-ops. Then I decided to do the Plus One program, which was fantastic.

I did a one-year master's degree, Master of Public Administration with the SPPUA, School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs. And then I graduated in May 2020 in the middle of the pandemic, which I'm sure most of your listeners can imagine was a very difficult time to graduate. So, I ended up accepting a temp position with Northeastern's Global Resilience Institute and worked there for about a year during the pandemic.

So, it's funny. So, when I wrapped that job up, it was in June of 2021, and I had to go to campus to turn in my Northeastern GRI work computer, and I was like, “Wow, that's a wrap for seven years!”

Tommy: No, that's awesome! It sounds like you're very involved in the community. And you just are sort of very community based and community driven in everything you seem to do, at least in your professional career. And it's really cool to see.

I remember perusing your LinkedIn. And before we even touch on any of the Northeastern stuff, I've seen that you worked on a lot of city council campaigns, especially in Newton, right? That's when you say suburbs of Massachusetts, Newton. Awesome.

Jack: That's right.

Tommy: And you're currently working for the city of Newton. So, I guess I know this is a little bit of a big question, because it's a question of why are you doing what you're doing? But what made you want to work in civics? And what made you want to work in the public sector like that?

Jack: Sure. So, I mean, for me growing up, my dad was a huge history and government and politics buff. And that kind of rubbed off on me. A big part of it, too, was I grew up with a brother with a severe disability. And very early on in life, I saw the powerful impact government can have, especially for vulnerable populations. So, that importance of public service and serving others was very instilled for me from a young age. But local government, in particular, I've been attracted to.

First, just to be completely honest, it's much more accessible. City Hall's right down the street. You don't have to relocate to Washington, D.C. I think another part of it, though, is people really underestimate the role local government plays in our lives, right? It's housing. It's the police. It's schools. It's roads. And there's this quote that a lot of local government practitioners use, which is, "think globally, but act locally." And there really is an opportunity, I think, in local government to have an impact on really major issues. I mean, so I'll just wrap up and say, you know, so many of the big issues in the U.S. right now aren't just happening...those decisions aren't just being made in D.C. They're being made in city and town halls all across the country.

Tommy: Right. I can imagine, especially when, you know, you flip on the television, most of the time you're only going to see national news. So, I think kind of to your point, think globally, but work locally. I think that's something that, especially yourself being in the local government and being in the public sector in that capacity, I'm sure that's something that resonates with you. But I think it also can help provide a perspective that sometimes we kind of forget to have, if that makes sense.

Jack: Absolutely.

Tommy: So, kind of to pivot a little bit more back towards your Northeastern experience and kind of just to really hit home this overarching theme of you being just so community driven. You're a member of YAAB, and you've been a member of YAAB for two years now. Is that right?

Jack: That's right. That's right.

Tommy: That's awesome. So, I know what YAAB is, and of course you know what YAAB is, but do you mind explaining to the audience what YAAB is and just kind of a little bit of background on it, if you know the history of it and why you joined it?

Jack: Absolutely. So, it's funny. So, a year after I wrapped up that temp job, I decided after a year of being Northeastern-free, I wanted back in. So, I applied to YAAB, the Young Alumni Advisory Board. And what YAAB is, it's really cool because most universities don't have this. It's a board that's meant to keep graduates of Northeastern, folks who graduate in the last 10 years, to stay engaged with the university. And it does that in all different kinds of ways.

They do alumni events, like Welcome to Your City. They do career building activities, like webinars with members from career services, or experts on, let's say, adulting, like how to buy a home. And there's just been some really cool events that I've seen. I know in the past couple of years, there was one YAAB member did an event for African American alumni. In New York City, a few YAAB members put together a concert featuring all Northeastern alumni bands.

Tommy: Oh, wow.

Jack: And it's a really cool way just to stay engaged and active with the university.

Tommy: That's really cool. So, do you have like a...have you put together an event? Like what's an example of an event that maybe you've put together or you've helped put together?

Jack: Sure, sure. So, I'll be honest, in terms of my involvement, I actually didn't really put on many events myself. What I actually ended up doing in the role was more trying to connect with student groups currently on campus. I actually took a current Northeastern student under my wing and did some mentoring. But I have attended plenty of very cool events.

Like I went to a 125th anniversary celebration of Northeastern, of course, Tommy, the event we ran into. I've also volunteered as, as you mentioned earlier at graduation. So, definitely a lot of reasons to be at Northeastern events.

Tommy: Yeah, absolutely. Especially this year being the 125th. So, that was the one on Krentzman quad, right? Were you...is that the one you're talking about?

Jack: Yes.

Tommy: Okay. Oh, that's fun. Oh, I'm surprised we didn't cross paths there. Cause I was there for that one as well. Oh, that's so cool. So, what did you kept referring to? I kept hearing the word role when you were talking about your experience with YAAB. Now, did you have a particular title or what, I guess, is my next question is, is for anybody out there who's interested in joining YAAB, what is sort of the structure of it?

Jack: Absolutely. So, it's about 30 members and there's a chair and a vice chair and basically everyone's term limited. Everyone, once you join, you have a two-year term. And the only way to extend that is to run for one of the leadership positions. But essentially, it meets quarterly, four times a fiscal year. And in terms of the structure of the board itself, generally the board puts in an order that are called five initiatives. So, some of those things I mentioned earlier, events, webinars, and every initiative usually has a team lead or co-lead.

And then members kind of, you know, they split into those different initiatives to work on their goals for the year. However, I mean, there's still room to cross pollinate, initiatives work together. You're allowed to go to events or encouraged, I should say, to go into events that are outside of your initiative. So, there is structure, but it's flexible.

Tommy: Oh, very cool. So, when you say that they meet quarterly, is that in person or virtually? Because for anybody who's considering applying, I'm sure one of the questions they're going to have is, do they have to be in Boston to be a member of YAAB?

Jack: So, I think one of the great things about YAAB is that alumni from around the country are allowed to be members of the board and you're strongly encouraged to attend in person. Northeastern provides some accommodation, but meetings are hybrid. So, you can participate online as well.

And I think I want to emphasize that point from around the country, because I think one of the cool things is, even though Northeastern is, you know, the main hub, if you will, is Boston, it truly has become a global university. And it's so cool to see the ways that YAAB members are having an impact in Washington, D.C. and New York and in California. And YAAB, our meetings may be in Boston, but our activities are across the country.

Tommy: Yeah, it really, it strikes me, you know, I've met a handful of other YAAB members, and it strikes me as just a, as the exemplification of Northeastern's global network. And just how Northeastern alumni are not only everywhere, but they're making an impact where they are. So that's really cool.

Jack: Absolutely.

Tommy: So, what would you consider to be the best part of being a YAAB member then?

Jack: For me, it's been the opportunity to re-engage with the university. It's great and fun to be back on campus. It's fun to be attending events. I think one of the coolest parts of it is, one, meeting, reconnecting with people I literally hadn't seen since before the pandemic through the board. But also meeting, I always forget how big Northeastern was, and through the board, I've met people who were the same age, maybe we were one year apart or something, and yet we never crossed paths during our time at Northeastern.

Or one person who I became friends with that's hilarious, I believe she was a senior my freshman year at Northeastern, and she participated in the event Dance 4 Me.

Tommy: Oh, ok.

Jack: And I remember seeing her on stage, hadn't seen her since 2015, ran into her at the first meeting I attended of YAAB. And I said, "Did you used to participate in Dance 4 Me? I recognize you from stage." And she was like, "No way." And we ended up becoming friends, which was really cool.

Tommy: Oh, that's really cool. That's awesome that you're able to not only just, I mean, like you said, you're at Northeastern for what, seven years, and you're still meeting people and connecting with people. That's really cool. And I think that really speaks to the community of the university as well. So, that's awesome.

Jack: Sure.

Tommy: So, no accident that Jack is here talking to us about YAAB, because I think he's a great representation of what YAAB is and what YAAB looks to accomplish. So there, how many members are cycling out? Or does it cycle out per class? Does that make sense?

Jack: That makes sense. So yeah, as I said, it's about 30 or so members, and about half of them cycle out every year because everyone has a two-year term. So, I would say probably about 15 are going to cycle out.

Tommy: Okay, great. So, in the next nine days, so February 23rd at 11:59 PM, is your last opportunity to apply for YAAB and be a member of this wonderful group here at Northeastern. Now, Jack, why should a young alum consider applying for YAAB?

Jack: Well, I think a young alum should consider applying for YAAB because as I said earlier, this is really your opportunity to re-engage with the university in so many different ways. Whether it's through career services, reconnecting with current student groups, putting on different events, helping with fundraising, promoting the university.

And it really is a way for you to express that Husky pride, to bring a little bit of Northeastern to wherever you are, and maybe relive a little bit of your Northeastern experience. So, I would say any young alum person really take advantage of this opportunity. Most universities focus on their older alumni, not their young alumni. So, I would say, I would encourage anybody who loves community, loves Northeastern, jump on this.

Tommy: That's awesome. And I think you hit the nail on the head with the fact that you're able to relive your Northeastern experience and carry a little bit of Northeastern pride with you wherever you are. So, the link will be in the bio of this page. But remember, February 23rd, 11:59 PM, that is your last opportunity to apply for YAAB. And we would love to see you do that.

Now, Jack, back to you real quick. Since this is “Northeastern Next,” I know we talked about your professional career, I know we talked YAAB, and are you, well, I'll let you answer this in a second, actually. But since this is “Northeastern Next,” what is next for you, Jack?

Jack: That's a good question. I mean, it's funny. I know if I want to continue my time on YAAB, I would have to run for vice chair. So, weighing that, whether, I mean, I love YAAB, but I'm thinking if I'm the right person to take on a leadership role, maybe, maybe not, we'll see. And in terms of my professional career, I don't know exactly what's next, but there's so many issues to tackle in Massachusetts and greater Boston where I live. I think it's so important to have young professionals, young alums too, kind of jumping on top of those issues. So, whatever I do next, it's going to be public service oriented and hopefully on the front lines of addressing some big problems.

Tommy: That's awesome, Jack. And it's people like you that give us some hope, which is really great. And honestly, I'm curious too, when you say vice chair, what kind of responsibilities would that entail?

Jack: Absolutely. So, the vice chair, their role is to help facilitate meetings, to help develop the agenda for meetings, to help form the initiatives and help keep the group on track. And essentially, you're actually, it's an interesting setup. So, you actually don't hold elections for chair. We only hold elections for vice chair. And then once you're elected to that position, you're essentially elected to a year for a year. And then the following year you're automatically promoted to chair. So, it's kind of like an apprenticeship, if you will, for the bigger role.

Tommy: Very cool. So, you get to also, in a way, stay for another cycle then, right?

Jack: That's exactly right.

Tommy: Awesome. Well, if you're listening and you're interested in YAAB, sounds like there's an okay chance you might be working with Jack Lovett. And that strikes me as something that would be a plus for you in your professional career. So, I just wanted to say thanks, Jack, for taking the time to join us today at “Northeastern Next” and talk about yourself and talk about YAAB. This was an awesome conversation. Thank you so much.

Jack: Thank you, Tommy. Always a pleasure.

Tommy: Yeah, always a pleasure.

Music: Enters.

Tommy: Thanks for listening to this week's episode of “Northeastern Next.” Are you or do you know a Northeastern alum with a great story to tell? If so, email us at alumni@northeastern.edu to be featured on a future episode of the pod. I hope you enjoyed the episode, and I'll see you the week after next.

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