



Connect with your Neighbors.....Change the World

2023 Council At-Large Questionnaire

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CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Erika Almmiron

I have read the attached questionnaire responses and certify that the information provided is accurate and the opinions stated accurately reflect my own positions.

Candidate Signature: 

Date: 01/12/2023

Please complete, sign and return this form via email in Word format to: info@phillynn.org and Gloria Gilman gmgilman@gmail.com. Also mail a copy with the signature page to

**Gloria Gilman
121 S. Broad St., Suite 1710
Philadelphia, PA 19107**

I. INTRODUCTION

Although many of the questions in Section III below call for a simple yes or no answer, please feel free to provide an explanation for any of your choices. If you have not yet come to a final decision, or don't currently have enough information to provide an informed answer, please so state.

II. BACKGROUND

1. What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held? None
2. With respect to your other qualifications for the office of At-Large Council member:

Since my last run for city council at large I worked both as a strategist for a national funder on democracy issues and as a consultant for Latinx voter engagement. This allowed me to support and help shape the campaign that ended prison gerrymandering in the state of Pennsylvania, fight for and win for an expansion on the property tax rebate program in the state for seniors and to build out infrastructure to engage Latinx voters in North Philly. Previous to my run I spent 9 years as the Executive Director of Juntos, a Latinx immigrant rights organization based in South Philadelphia doing local, state and national social justice work to end the criminalization of migration and people of

color. Our organization was at the forefront of pressuring the city to implement the most progressive sanctuary city model in the country. Philadelphia's Sanctuary City model, which was shaped by Juntos, has since been adapted by over 200 municipalities around the country. Thus included putting an end to ICE holds between ICE and police and a few years later ending the access ICE had to the arrest database in the city, PARS.

Prior to serving as the Executive Director of Juntos, I was the assistant director at The Philadelphia Student Union. There I gave high school students the tools and support they needed to lead a school reform campaign. I supported and mentored brilliant young people who were organizing to make their schools safer without relying on suspensions and arrests. We also organized to stop school closings, for fully funded public schools and increased counselors, teachers and nurses.

Prior to working at the Philadelphia Student Union I worked for the American Friends Service Committee with women organizing in sweatshops on the U.S. Mexican border. Prior to that I worked at Planned Parenthood as a counselor supporting women looking to access healthcare.

a. What community or policy issues have you worked on, and in what capacity? (Please provide the names of two or three individuals who can provide information about your previous work.)

Caitlin Barry is a professor at Villanova Law and immigration attorney who worked closely with me on the sanctuary city policies in the city.

Tania Unzuete is the Political Director at Mijente, the national Latinx organization I consulted with on Latinx voter engagement program in Philadelphia.

Deborah Rose from All Voting is Local worked closely with me on executing the strategy for the prison gerrymandering reform campaign and the work to expand the state budget and use pandemic funds to help reach more seniors who need property tax relief.

I can send these contacts via text.

c. What other endorsements have you received?

I have not yet received any formal endorsements this campaign cycle yet as it is early in the process but I feel very confident that I can build the same and probably larger coalition from my last run for city council at large in 2019. At that time I finished the run with over 30 endorsements from local and national organizations and electeds. The endorsements included Neighborhood Networks and some of the following; SEIU 32BJ, Unite Here, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Black Clergy, Working Families Party, Mijente, Liberty City Dems and Bernie Sanders.

d. How do you plan to win?

I will answer this question in as much detail as possible without compromising internal campaign strategy.

My campaign will build on my last run for council by bringing back the broad-based coalition of organizations that endorsed me to get excited for this run again as a progressive woman of color. I will reengage the over 100 volunteers I was able to engage last run to knock doors in targeted wards and areas in March, April and May. My campaign also has gained the support from several prominent independent field operations that will canvas in person, online and over the phone that targets Latinx voters and progressive voters. This expansion of the campaign's coalition of Latinx voters can add to the base I had last time and can help in growing the Latinx voter base in the city to be more engaged. Our campaign will focus on the areas of the city in which the independent field operations don't have a base. This setup will allow us to have a citywide reach without having to build a citywide program. We will use the money saved from not having to build out a citywide field program to focus on other outreach efforts.

We will couple this canvassing strategy with an aggressive GOTV strategy, focusing on voters we've previously reached at the door, on the phone and online.

I also have a strong endorsement plan that prioritizes unions, neighborhood groups, progressive organizing groups, leaders and electeds as well as Latinx voters. Our projections have us getting 60,000 votes, the amount, at this phase, we believe we will need to win handily.

e. How much money have you raised? How much do you expect to raise?

I currently have over \$40,000 raised and we are on track to raise over \$200,000

3. What three things would you most want to accomplish if elected?

If elected to office I would prioritize public safety given the rise of gun violence since the pandemic, this would include focusing on reforms that work to address violence as well as supporting our 911 operators and response systems to prioritize people over punitive measures. I will also work to secure additional funding for the public school system changes to housing laws that would allow people to stay in their homes.

III. ISSUES

A. Economic Development

What do you see as the current economic picture of Philadelphia and what would you do to make economic development more just, fair, and equitable for all Philadelphians?

Philly is still currently the poorest of the largest cities in the country and continues to have a wider gap between those who have and the poor. As inflation keeps impacting things from groceries to rent prices we must implement policies that address everyday bread and butter issues for our community. We must also look into growing programs that can help those who need access to better paying jobs and apprenticeship programs.

Would you back legislation to:

1. Impose an impact fee on businesses failing to pay workers \$15/hr to reimburse the City for the costs of relieving poverty?

Yes

1. Take \$200 million of City pension funds now invested in risky securities to invest in neighborhood economic development projects, through a public bank or otherwise?

Yes

1. Create a program to provide technical assistance and start-up funding for cooperative, worker-owned businesses and housing?

Yes

1. Take whatever steps are needed to create and fund a Bank of Philadelphia to hold all City deposits and invest them locally?

Yes

1. Create a system of participatory budgeting that would allow City residents to control allocation of all or a portion of the funds allocated in the City budget?

Yes

B. Education

What are the root causes for the current state of Philadelphia Public Schools and what would you do to address these issues?

Specifically, would you back legislation to:

1. Regulate charter schools by making their budgetary practices transparent, ridding them of conflicts of interest, and stopping them from cherry-picking their student bodies? Would you be willing to attach that plan to a budget rider?

Yes

1. Make the School Board an elective office, or otherwise deepen community participation in School Board appointments?

Yes

1. Compute the cost/benefit ratio for the School District of all proposed KOZ zones before they're approved by Council?

Yes

1. Increase direct City funding for the School District? If so, please explain. Yes, I believe that part of the crisis we have with gun violence is the issue of our schools being underfunded and that there are limited resources for our young people. This is a priority of mine.

C. Criminal Justice

What do you see as the current state of the Criminal Justice System in Philadelphia and what would you do to address any perceived problems/issues?

Would you back legislation to:

1. Fully end the stop and frisk program?

Yes

1. Change the Charter to create an oversight board to keep a check on Philadelphia prison conditions?

Yes

1. Increase post-release counseling for jobs, housing and other support services?

Yes

1. Bar employers from denying jobs to ex-offenders without a specific job-related basis?

Yes

D. The Role of Community in the Economic and Political Systems in Philly

What do you see as the role of the community in our political and economic systems and what would you do to make it more fair, just, and equitable for all Philadelphians?

Would you back legislation to:

1. Bar or limit privatization of City property and work done by City employees? More specifically are there any circumstances under which you would sell PGW?

Yes, I would bar or limit privatization of city property and work done by city employees and I would not sell PGW.

1. Move Pension Fund investment decisions in-house?

Yes

1. Reform PIDC, the City's main economic development funding agency, so that its Board has a majority of public and community members, rather than Chamber of Commerce appointed members?

Yes

1. Require the City to withdraw subsidies from corporations that fail to provide jobs or other benefits to City residents?

Yes

1. Publicly finance City elections?

Yes

E. Housing

What are the root causes of the current Housing Crisis in Philadelphia and how would you address these issues?

Would you back legislation to:

1. Create a rent stabilization program?

Yes

1. End, limit or curtail Councilmanic prerogative over land disposition?

Yes

1. Create or support more affordable housing, both rental and home ownership? Please specify.

Yes

1. What would you do to curtail or limit the effects of gentrification in our neighborhoods that are displacing long term and low-income residents?

I think there are several factors at play that need to be addressed to curtail gentrification that displaces long term and low income residents. For starters, we need to start with pushing for policies that ensure low-income and affordable housing is included in any development projects that get approved in the city so development has to include people who need access to housing. We should also grow and expand any programs that help maintain and improve houses owned by families that make under a certain amount to ensure they can keep their houses safe and up to date, this should include green initiatives like new weatherized windows, solar energy equipment, etc. We should have rebate programs to assist more people on their property taxes, policies that stop the

property taxes increasing on people who fall below the poverty line, especially if they are seniors. We should have programs that help renters not have to be pushed out of their neighborhoods because of the rising cost of rent as well as programs that help small landlords maintain their properties and keep them safe and be incentivized to not raise their rents.

F. Environmental Justice

What are the major Environmental issues in Philadelphia and what would you do to address them?

Please answer the following specific questions:

1. Would you use the City's power of the purse to prevent SEPTA from continuing to build and use natural-gas fueled power plants in the City?

Yes

1. What will you do to support and promote the use of solar and other renewable energy sources in the City?

I think there are many policies that could be instituted in the city to allow for the growth of solar energy, including helping local home owners in low income neighborhoods to access solar panels at low or no cost, which in turn will help with their growing utility bills. I believe there are ways to also hire local Philadelphians to work on projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make our city more sustainable. These jobs would be well paying jobs that give worker skills. I have supported and will continue to support an energy plan to transition Philadelphia to a democratically controlled 100% renewable energy system by 2030, create unionized jobs, and center the decisions and needs of Philadelphia's working class and communities of color.

1. Do you support a plan for City government or the entire City to be fossil-free by a particular date? If so, how would you accomplish that goal?

Yes

G. Health Care

What can the City do to provide and support adequate and affordable health care for its residents?

Specially answer the following question:

1. Would you support the construction of a City-owned Northeast Health Center?

Yes and also will look into if there are gaps in other parts of the city who may not have access to local health care.

H. Taxes

Would is your plan for a fair, just and equitable taxing structure for the City of Philadelphia, addressing specifically your position on real estate, corporate, and individual taxing rates?

Specifically answer the following:

1. Would you increase taxes if the programs you wish to fund cannot otherwise be paid for?

Yes, I would increase taxes but I will need to ensure that the tax distribution is equitable. There are many programs that need to be funded but they should not be propped up by taxing the poor, only driving more families into poverty. I believe that we need a progressive tax structure that provides tax relief for poor and working people and calls on high earning individuals and corporations to pay their fair share.

2. Which taxes would you propose raising?

As an elected leader I will champion a tax structure in which those who profit the most are called upon to pay their fair share. Locally, I believe we should look to raise taxes on the highest earning corporations. I also believe our city's mega nonprofits need to pay their fair share through a Payments In Lieu of Taxes program as defined by Rendell's 1994 memo of a rate of 50% their estimated forgone taxes.

I. General Statement

Use this space to provide any further information that you would like us to consider about your candidacy, not covered by the questions above.