



Connect with your Neighbors.....Change the World **2023 Council At-Large Questionnaire**

Prepared by: Sherrie Cohen Email: cohen4council@gmail.com Phone: 215-620-3396

Committee Name: Cohen For Council

Campaign Address: 5635 N. 16th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19141

Campaign Email: cohen4council@gmail.com Website;

CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: Sherrie Cohen

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: /s/ Sherrie Cohen Date: 1-12-23

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?

I have held elected government office, but have been elected to positions in the Democratic Party. I am an elected committee person in the 17th Ward, was twice elected as a Bernie Sanders delegate, in 2016 and 2020, to the Democratic National Convention, and have been elected to the State Committee.

2. With respect to your other qualifications for the office of At-Large Council member:

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.)

Member, A Concerned Community Association. Testify on behalf of neighborhood organization at Zoning Board of Adjustment hearings, in order to prevent further neighborhood deterioration. Sandra Broadus

Member, Reclaim Philadelphia, Gender Justice Caucus. Helped organize and speak at Anti-Patriarchy Teach-In. Maria Thomson

Attorney, Brodie & Rubinsky, P.C. Attorney focused on Lead Based Paint Ordinance litigation. Represented tenants in Landlord/Tenant Court in actions to enforce city's Lead Law, requiring lead inspections be conducted prior to the move-in date of any tenant with children ages 6 and under. Helped draft proposed amendments to Lead Law to eliminate loopholes in the law. Amendments to the Lead Law are now before Council. Josh Rubinsky

Advocacy Committee, Women's Community Revitalization Project, fighting to increase funding to the Housing Trust Fund for the building of low-income housing in Philadelphia. Christi Clark, Nora Lichtash

Member, PCAPS, Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for Public Schools. Promoted community schools, assisted parent organizing in elementary schools facing proposed Renaissance charter conversions, testified before School Reform Commission numerous times. Kendra Brooks, Tonya Bah

Member, Live Free Team, POWER, Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower and Rebuild. Participated in campaign to end cash bail, and for the Citizens Police Oversight Commission. Gayle Lacks,

Attorney/Organizer, Tenant Union Representative Network. Staffed the Help Desk at Landlord/Tenant Court, providing legal advice to tenants at risk of eviction; taught weekly classes on tenant rights; organized tenants in HUD-assisted affordable housing to preserve affordability of housing. Phil Lord

Coordinator, Coalition For Essential Services, a labor/community coalition which fought for a fair and equitable budget not balanced on the backs of poor and working people; co-chaired Community Forum for the Next Governor. Stan Shapiro, Gloria Gilman

Steering Committee, Coalition to Save the Libraries, a coalition of members of the 11 neighborhood libraries threatened with permanent closure and allies. Also, was one of the lawyers who sued to keep the libraries open, and we won! Received Friends of Free Library Award as a Champion of the Greater Good. Betty Beaufort, Kristin Campbell

Executive Committee, Friends of the David Cohen Ogontz Branch Library. Seek to build community support for the branch; plan children's programs. Leni Johnson

Co-Chair, International Women's Day Coalition, a coalition of labor and women's groups demanding rights and liberation for working women locally and internationally. Arleen Olshan

Co-Chair, Liberty City Democratic Club, a group endorsing pro-LGBT candidates in greater Philadelphia. Gary Hines, Lee Carson

Co-Chair, Allies Caucus, Elements, a predominantly Black queer womyn of color organization. Conducted workshops for allies to increase their action in solidarity with Black queer womyn. Adrienne Williams, Shayna Sheness Israel

Co-Chair, Civil Rights Committee, Philadelphia Bar Association. Committee conducted public education and advocated before the Bar's Board of Governors to pass resolutions on local, state, and national civil rights issues. Michael Carroll, Robert Meek

Member, Community Grantmaking Committee, Bread and Roses Community Fund. Committee reviewed applications, interviewed and recommended community organizing groups for funding. Casey Cook

Member, Steering Committee, Fair Taxation Coalition. Fought to maintain David Cohen wage tax credit for working families living in poverty. Stan Shapiro, Jonathan Stein

3. What other endorsements have you received?

I am applying for endorsements from progressive organizations, unions and wards. I am ever grateful to Neighborhood Networks for your endorsements in my prior Council races.

4. How do you plan to win?

My plan to win is to be unapologetic about who I am and what I believe in. I am a bold progressive, raised by social movements, who seeks to build the economic and political power of the multi-racial poor and working class of Philadelphia. I am a pro-working class, pro-Black, pro-Latinx, Jewish, democratic socialist, prison industrial complex abolitionist, queer and feminist activist, committed to a human rights agenda, including climate justice, housing justice, educational justice and immigration justice.

My base of support includes folks I've organized with over the years – in struggles around housing (for eviction protections, lead-safe homes, funding for the Housing Trust Fund); full funding for essential city services (including libraries, pools and youth jobs); fair taxation (fighting against business tax cuts and the property tax abatement, and for PILOTs and retention of the original low-income wage tax refund); criminal justice reform (working to end cash bail, and for a more empowered police oversight commission); education justice (for ending the School Reform Commission, and against charter expansion); climate justice (working to stop the gas power plant in Nicetown and to transition PGW to fossil-free energy); economic justice (fighting for \$15/hour, supporting workers in unionization and contract fights); and, TLGBQ+ rights (increasing protections for transgender and gender nonconforming people).

I believe my campaign's effort, the broad public support I have gained through decades of activism, efforts by the unions, organizations and wards who endorse me, and the consistent support of voters that I have received in my prior campaigns of over 44,000 votes in 2011 (and runner-up in 6th place) and over 45,000 votes in 2015 will bring me (and us) victory in 2023.

I am the only candidate in this race who has previously received over 44,000 votes in two prior Council At-Large elections in the Democratic primary.

5. How much money have you raised? How much do you expect to raise? I have raised under \$10,000 so far, as I began fundraising late in 2022. I expect to raise well over \$100,000.

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

- 1) Reallocation of substantial funds from our bloated police department budget into investments in our most disinvested and justice-impacted neighborhoods, for jobs and mentoring for youth, credible messenger intervention programs, and an alternative community-led public safety system, including dispatch of non-police response teams to most 911 calls. We cannot police ourselves out of our current public safety crisis.
- 2) Establishment of elected community boards in City Council districts to decide land disposition issues, instead of the current system of councilmanic prerogative. Land disposition issues are community issues and should not be decided by a single person.
- 3) Establishment of a citywide community benefits ordinance, requiring that in all development projects of a certain size, a developer must provide certain community benefits. We cannot allow developers to continue to run roughshod over our communities.

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?

We are the poorest large city in our nation, and have been the most incarcerated as well. In 2019, our poverty rate was 23.3%. 40.2% of Latinx residents, 26.7% of Black residents, 23.1% of Asian residents, and 12.7% of white residents are poor. A minimum wage worker would need to work 100 hours a week to afford a one-bedroom rental in Philly. 250,000 people lack access to nutritious food needed to live a healthy life. Unaffordable housing and rising rents, displacement caused by gentrification, decades of systematic racist divestment and historic redlining, overpolicing and mass incarceration, an underfunded school district and low literacy, and generational trauma, all caused by racial capitalism and austerity budgeting, drive our persistent poverty rate.

Economic development must be community-led. The city's economic development agencies, community development and workforce development agencies must be led by the community, through community oversight boards. The Zoning Board of Adjustment must be populated with Board members who favor community interests, not developers' interests.

Yes, to all questions:

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?
2. 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?
3. Create a program to provide technical assistance and start-up funding for cooperative, worker-owned businesses and housing?
4. Take whatever steps are needed to create and fund a Bank of Philadelphia to hold all City deposits and invest them locally?
5. 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? District Council members should be mandated to use a participatory budgeting process for allocation of the specific capital funds each District Council member is allocated.

B. Education

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

Our public schools have been massively underfunded for generations due to austerity budgeting and systemic racism. Our school population is 86% students of color, and neoliberal education reforms such as school privatization have further decimated school funding.

I will fight for full funding of our schools and educational equity. We must end the school to prison pipeline, school suspensions of elementary school students, metal detectors in high schools, zero tolerance policies, high stakes testing, and the toxic lead, asbestos and mold in our schools.

I will seek democratic school governance including a democratically elected school board, school and community-based solutions to school transformation, restorative practices, a curriculum that will educate to liberate, a vast increase in Black teachers, counselors not police and military recruiters, small classes, music and art and libraries in our schools, social and emotional supports, air conditioning in our schools, and fair funding for Community College. I will fight to end charter expansion and work to establish new standards of charter accountability.

I will fight to reverse years of austerity funding by a) eliminating the 10 year property tax abatement and directing those funds towards our public schools and deeply affordable housing, b) using American Rescue Plan Act funding for our schools, and c) demanding anchor institutions, like the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel, either pay property taxes or provide PILOTs.

Yes, to all questions:

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?
2. Make the School Board an elective office, or otherwise deepen community participation in School Board appointments?
3. Compute the cost/benefit ratio for the School District of all proposed KOZ zones before they're approved by Council? Yes, this must be mandated.
4. Increase direct City funding for the School District? If so, please explain. Change the ratio of the property tax for more funding to our schools.

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?

Our criminal justice system is a white supremacist punitive system that must be reimagined and transformed. We must decarcerate our city.

I believe in restorative justice and in healing justice, where we holistically respond to and bring collective practices to intervene on generational trauma and violence.

I believe in transformative justice, which is a liberatory approach to violence that seeks safety and accountability without relying on state punishment.

Safety means to me that we should address the harm in our communities through healing and accountability, instead of being "tough on crime," and use the least restrictive possible alternatives. I recognize the inaccuracy of the victim/offender dichotomy and that so many defendants are also survivors.

I believe the root causes of violence and crime are poverty, trauma, addiction and unmet mental health needs. This needs to be addressed through expanded social services and restorative justice processes, like community-led mediation for reconciliation.

I will fight to end: cash bail; disproportionate police stops in Black and brown communities; racial bias in policing, including unconstitutional stop and frisk, as well as racialized prosecution and incarceration; the school to prison pipeline; the city's expansive parole and probation supervision regimes; the trying of youth as adults and the detention of youth in adult jails or prison; wealth-based detention and automatic detainers; electronic monitoring.

I will fight for: detention hearings to be held within three days of incarceration in which the onus is on the prosecutor to show that pretrial release is not safe, rather than bail review hearings that place the burden on the defense; more participatory defense hubs throughout the city; former Councilmember Gym's legislation calling for the establishment of a Prisons Oversight Board with the power to investigate systemic problems in the Philadelphia prisons and provide transparency and community engagement; reinvestment of money saved by decarceration into the communities most harmed by mass incarceration.

I want to treat drug addiction as a health issue, conduct needs assessments not risk assessments, and replace our current system with one guided by principles of restorative justice. We must fully decriminalize marijuana, provide automatic and retroactive expungements of criminal records based on marijuana possession or sales, and decriminalize sex work.

Yes to all questions.

Would you back legislation to:

1. Fully end the stop and frisk program?
2. Change the Charter to create an oversight board to keep a check on Philadelphia prison conditions?
3. Increase post-release counseling for jobs, housing and other support services?
4. Bar employers from denying jobs to ex-offenders without a specific job-related basis?

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?

Every part of our political and economic systems must be community-led.

I will work to build the power of our working class by: exacting penalties on employers who violate pro-worker ordinances; establishing a workers' rights commission to advise Council on pro-worker policies; growing public sector jobs to employ more city residents and meet public needs; expanding local purchasing by the city and by educational and medical institutions to increase jobs for Philadelphia workers; ending the two-tiered wage system for tipped workers; fighting to end state preemption of the minimum wage.

To commodify resources, I will seek to: expand city funding for free pre-K education; demand free transit; decommodify, democratize and municipalize our energy resources; work to vastly expand social housing, and support the creation of a public city bank.

To diminish the power of capital, I will: push to pass the proposed wealth tax; and, fight to fully end the 10-year property tax abatement.

To democratize the economy, I will: support the cooperative economy including worker and consumer coops; fight for universal rent control, universal good cause eviction and universal right to counsel; demand PILOTs from anchor institutions.

Yes to all questions, except No to the second part of question 1.

Would you back legislation to:

1. Bar or limit privatization of City property and work done by City employees? Yes. More specifically are there any circumstances under which you would sell PGW? No.

2. Move Pension Fund investment decisions in-house?
3. 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?
4. Require the City to withdraw subsidies from corporations that fail to provide jobs or other benefits to City residents?
5. Publicly finance City elections?

E. Housing

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

The root causes of the current housing crisis in Philadelphia include: that housing is viewed as a commodity, not a human right; historic structural racism in the housing market; white flight decades ago; current gentrification causing displacement; the 10-year property tax abatement; rising rents; a housing gap of 60,000 units of deeply affordable housing; demonization of and limited public housing; racist and classist discrimination against voucher holders; weak enforcement of tenant rights including the right to a habitable home; a landlord/tenant court that has historically been hostile to tenants; lack of access to counsel for tenants facing eviction or foreclosure.

I would address these issues by fighting for: universal Rent Control, expanded Good Cause to include all tenants, and universal Right to Counsel for all tenants citywide facing eviction, foreclosure or sheriff's sale; a ban on campaign contributions from real estate developers, as Los Angeles has enacted; half of all land in the Housing Trust Fund to go to families making less than 30% of Area Median Income (AMI) (or \$28,000 for a family of four); \$100 million for our Housing Trust Fund, like Washington, D.C., for deeply affordable and accessible housing; expansion of the Affordable Housing Overlay bill citywide, compelling inclusion of deeply affordable units in market rate development; passage of the Land Justice legislation citywide, to prioritize city land for permanently and deeply affordable housing; an end to the 10 year property tax abatement, with the portion going to the city to be earmarked to the Housing Trust Fund for families making less than 30% of AMI; an end to discrimination against voucher holders and tenant blacklisting based on housing court records: PHA to stop privatizing public housing stock; community control of land and housing through support of a dedicated fund to provide technical assistance and start-up funding for community land trusts and limited equity housing cooperatives; creation of elected Community Boards in each Council district to determine land disposition, rather than the district councilperson.

I will also fight for: a Right of First Refusal which would give a nonprofit developer, government agency or tenant association the ability to purchase a subsidized rental property if the owner opts out of the subsidy program; project-based vouchers from the federal government to go to community-controlled permanently affordable housing that will keep residents immune from displacement and are forever affordable; increased federal funding to repair public housing; PHA to stop demolishing or privatizing public housing stock; the federal government to return to building public housing and repeal the Faircloth Amendment, which acts to prevent the construction of new public housing; legislation, as in Vermont, that a project must commit to perpetual affordability, or it won't be considered for Low-Income Housing Tax funds or state tax credits, which often help fund project-based Section 8 housing; and, once a Philadelphia Public Bank is established, ensure that funds are prioritized for access to capital so that community land trusts can develop community-controlled deeply affordable housing.

I would demand that the L&I budget be increased to provide for a sufficient number of inspectors to hold landlords to account in addressing tenant-reported repair issues. I would demand that the Controller's office

conduct an audit of L&I's rental licensing and housing code enforcement functions, as recent audits of L&I have not reviewed these functions.

I would fight to transition our housing inspection system from one that is complaint-based to one that is proactive.

Yes to all questions.

Would you back legislation to:

1. Create a rent stabilization program?
2. End, limit or curtail Councilmanic prerogative over land disposition?
3. Create or support more affordable housing, both rental and home ownership? Please specify. See above.
4. What would you do to curtail or limit the effects of gentrification in our neighborhoods that is displacing long term and low-income residents? Establish development moratoria, historic districts and/or overlay districts to curtail or limit the effects of gentrification.

F. Environmental Justice

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

- Our asthma rate is twice the national average and even 3 times higher in areas like Nicetown and Southwest Philadelphia.
- Illegal dumping in communities
- Our waste and recycling is often shipped to Chester or other locations to be burned, creating toxic impacts on other low-income communities and communities of color
- We have lead, asbestos and mold crises in our schools.
- One of the top polluters in the city is the former Sunoco site in Bridesburg. It is the largest batch phenol production plant, which has contributed to an underground plume of toxic chemical contamination, and much disease in the community.
- The destruction of the FDR Meadows, South Philadelphia's only public green space with urban meadows and woodlands, to build a \$100 million sports complex with artificial turf fields for private rental, is wrong.
- PGW must be democratized and decarbonized.
- The lands underlying the former PES refinery must be completely decontaminated.
- We must establish a labor/community Green New Deal Commission to develop a multi-year plan and strategy for our city.

Climate crisis: As the climate emergency deepens, our city must not continue to subsidize fossil fuel development in the region. Instead, we must utilize energy efficiency measures and invest in just and clean energy infrastructure that delivers clean energy, jobs, and justice to frontline communities. We should call for a moratorium on any new fossil fuel development including fossil fuel infrastructure like pipelines. This should be done in lockstep with a just transition plan for community and labor, and in a way that does not exacerbate energy insecurity. I would also use the city's authority to regulate air quality more strictly than the state and federal minimums, discouraging any new air-polluting facilities (not just fossil fuels) from locating in the city.

Renewable energy: We need to require all City energy purchases to be 100% renewable as soon as financially

viable. We need an energy democracy approach, in which local energy ownership and generation by communities of color and impacted communities must be centered, prioritized and invested in.

Air quality: The air we breathe fails to meet the current federal health-based standards for ground-level ozone, a pollutant that can permanently scar lung tissue and seriously aggravate diseases like asthma and bronchitis. Our current air management code fails to account for the cumulative impact bad air can have on people's health. I will introduce legislation to conduct the appropriate studies and update Philadelphia's air management code to consider the cumulative impact and health conditions as a requirement of Air Management Services' permit process. The positions necessary to enforce the air management code must be fully funded.

Community gardens: Many community gardens are on city-owned land and are at constant risk of development. I will protect these gardens by transferring city-owned land currently being cultivated as garden space to community land trusts to ensure against future development.

Recycling: Philadelphia must increase its recycling. The city should establish a Buy Recycled purchasing policy to procure products and services with recycled content. We must pursue a zero-waste strategy that includes deeper re-use and composting strategies. It should be mandatory for landlords and building owners to provide residents with three bins: for landfill, recycling and compost. The city should follow the official definition of Zero Waste as codified by the Zero Waste International Alliance. Zero Waste means NO incineration and aims for at least 90% reduction of waste to landfill. Incineration harms the health of Philadelphians with asthma, cancer and more. Most of this incineration is in the three PA incinerators surrounding the city. Community education on recycling should center communities on the frontline of environmental racism. San Francisco has a great model of intensive ongoing education.

Lead poisoning: Lead is a highly poisonous metal. Exposure through old paint, contaminated soils, drinking water and in emissions can affect almost every organ in the body and nervous system. 85% of the lead emitted by industry in the city is from the Northeast Philadelphia airport, since small jets still use leaded aviation fuel. The city must do all that it can to stop the burning of leaded aviation fuel. The three trash incinerators that Philadelphia feeds our trash to are large emitters of lead into the air.

SEPTA should transition to a carbon free transit system by 2035. As a member of Council, I will vote against any candidate for the SEPTA Board who refuses to publicly support a goal of a carbon-free SEPTA by 2035.

Yes to all questions.

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

G. Health Care

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

Philadelphia ranks the lowest of Pennsylvania's 67 counties for health outcomes. The Black community sees some of the poorest health outcomes in the city relative to other racial groups with the highest rates of hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, childhood asthma, adult obesity, maternal and infant mortality, and homicide mortality.

We need our health care centers to be fully funded and we must establish a vast city program of culturally competent community health care workers to reach out to every underserved community.

We need safe, stable housing, which is critical for physical and mental health and well-being. Lack of stable housing is associated with 27.3 fewer years of life expectancy.

Specially answer the following question:

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

H. Taxes

What 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?

I would end the 10-year property tax abatement (and earmark the 55% school portion toward cleaning up toxic schools, and the 45% city portion to the Housing Trust Fund for families making less than 30% of the area median income); enact PILOTS for large non-profits at 50% of their estimated forgone taxes; restore the BIRT (Business Income and Revenue Tax), particularly the Gross Receipts portion, to pre-2018 cut levels (1.415% on gross receipts); increase the Use and Occupancy tax to 1.5% and proportionally increase the exemption; enact impact fee on low-wage employers who fail to pay their employees a living wage.

I would make nontaxable the first \$25,000 of income for the city wage tax, and make permanent the LOOP (Longtime Owner Occupants Program).

Specifically answer the following:

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

Yes

2. Which taxes would you propose raising? See above.

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.

o