



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

2023 City Controller Candidate Questionnaire

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Instructions

Please complete the following questions on this form, and return by email to gmgilman@gmail.com.

I. Background

1. Please describe your professional and educational history and how it prepares you for the position of Controller.

I worked my way through high school, when I left my home, through college and two master's degrees, in interdisciplinary health sciences and public health. I've published scientific scholarship, and worked on the frontline during the pandemic distributing basics and, later on, volunteering to vaccinate people. I have faced an empty bank account along the way, saddled with student loan debt and basic costs of living. My lived experiences and educational background have prepared me very well for the

position of City Controller. Those experiences keep my work rooted in values, policy-focused, data-driven, and people-centric. Philadelphia residents deserve an elected official who understands their struggles and will look for evidence-based solutions to Philly's problems.

2. How much money have you raised, and how much do you anticipate raising? What is your plan to win?

We have raised nearly \$200,000 and we anticipate raising close to \$300,000. We know our win number – about 65,000. We see our key constituencies as: progressive voters citywide, including older voters and younger voters in particular, with young women forming the backbone of our base. We are especially targeting progressive wards that share our values, which offer enough of a base to provide a path to citywide victory.

At every step of this campaign, we have and will center marginalized groups in my work, build on the 25,000+ votes and thousands of positive IDs last year's campaign generated, and implement cutting edge campaign technology and data that refines our targeting. We are confident that if we can identify 30,000 positive IDs and key super-voters across Philadelphia, we have a name recognition edge and fundraising capacity to have a clean shot at winning this 3-person campaign in which our two opponents may take votes from each other.

3. What endorsements have you obtained and what others do you expect?

We have gotten endorsements from Progressive Victory and Blue America.

II. General Duties of Office

4. Please discuss what you see as the most important functions of the Controller in improving the lives of Philadelphians, and the priorities you would seek to achieve if you were elected.

I believe that the most important function of the City Controller is to serve as the city's fiscal watchdog. So much of the City's money is missing or underperforming relative to its intended use. We can subpoena missing money; we can analyze and audit to ascertain misuse, and we can find money for and propose improvements that generate fiscal health and positive outcomes for Philadelphia.

One of my top priorities in this office is finding the money to establish a public bank – a financial institution that funds communities instead of private investors. Something like this is especially necessary in a city like Philadelphia, where capital interests have destabilized neighborhoods through overpolicing, gentrification, environmental destruction, and more. As a member of the Board of Pensions, I would also work directly with unions to fight for fair contracts, stop wage theft, and secure benefits. A third priority would be to fully finance the notoriously underfunded Philadelphia public school system. Our office would collaborate with community leaders and stakeholders to modernize and green our school infrastructure.

The City Controller's office has excellent workers – it needs a leader who won't leave anyone behind and is committed to finding creative solutions to complex problems, so that we are all empowered to make our communities stronger and healthier.

5. What would you do to increase public access to the City's budget and financial information?

If elected, I will work to establish an online City Controller data dashboard that will constantly be updated and clearly display Philadelphia's budget with a goal of providing itemized information on how each department is spending taxpayer dollars. This will make this important information easily accessible and digestible. Philadelphians deserve to know where they're money is going. Our office would also set up weekly town halls to meet folks where they are and increase outreach efforts to educate the public and improve financial literacy.

6. What would you do to insulate yourself from political interference in the performance of the Controller's job?

I am the only anti-establishment candidate in this race. The core purpose of my candidacy is to elevate people over party – to refuse special interest influence. But there's nothing any one person can do to fully insulate themselves from politics; that's why, as City Controller, I will create an independent fiscal monitor to engage in quality assurance over the Controller's office. It is imperative that people know whether or not the fiscal watchdog is capable of and proactively doing its utmost to fulfill its obligations under the Home Charter. I would work with Council, the Mayor and other stakeholders to identify an independent and impactful inspector general function to improve Philadelphia's financial health.

III. Specific Audit Targets

7. Would you agree to audit the Treasurer's Department to determine whether there are funds available within various City accounts to capitalize, or provide deposits for, a Philadelphia Public Bank.

Absolutely. Creating a public bank will be one of my top priorities if I am elected to this office, and part of that process is figuring out where we can get funding for it. We saw what happened to the public bank bill – electeds passed the buck back and forth, and nobody actually took the steps necessary to find the money. I promise I will find the money.

8. Would you be willing to audit the City Revenue Department's performance in collecting little enforced taxes such as the School District Unearned Income Tax, and the Gross Receipts Tax on non-Philadelphia companies.

Yes. We cannot ensure proper and equitable funding for all the services that Philadelphians need without also collecting tax revenue. Failing to collect revenue directly harms people in the city; it's a form of regressive wealth redistribution. We must ensure that companies and individuals are paying their fair share of taxes so as to not deprive the City of financial resources.

9. What steps would you take to evaluate City decisions to contract out City services to private for profit or non-profit agencies and organizations?

If it's public money, the Controller can access it – Philadelphia is not supposed to hand out its money to private contractors and then assume everything will be fine. Accountability is a core part of the contract process. Public money requires public accountability, and as Controller I will bring contractors to public hearings in City Council or court as needed to obtain basic facts about where taxpayer dollars are going.

It's also critical that we diversify our contractor work force to ensure it is representative of the city it is working in. I will maintain oversight on fair contractor hiring practices so that the people building our infrastructure are as diverse as the populations that infrastructure is meant to serve. We need to engage in consistent communication and positive relations with local community leaders and activists. We can create avenues for Philadelphia residents to provide feedback on city contractor services and maintain

information exchange on how construction projects are impacting the community in order to root out bad contractors.

I would also conduct audits within the City departments that hire private contractors to weed-out conflicts of interests and corruption.

IV. Related City Agencies

10. The City Controller sits as a member of the City's Board of Pensions. What steps, if any, would you recommend to improve Fund performance?

Our bond market is performing about half as well as it would be if we'd invested in an index fund instead of Wall Street investor firms. We need to divest pension funds from risky Wall Street funds and private banks, where Philly spends \$100 million annually. We should instead invest in community-focused wealth-building, like a public bank. And we need to make sure we are doing everything we can to guarantee the quality and timeliness of our city's engagement reports, which bond market investors rely on.

11. Do you believe the Pension Fund should engage in socially responsible investing? Or invest in a Philadelphia Public Bank?

I believe that the Pension Fund should be absolutely engaged in socially responsible investing – social investments pay off for society, reduce costs and stressors on people in Philadelphia, and improve community quality of life while still returning on investment. This could include investments into solar energy companies to make the City greener or minority-owned businesses to promote economic growth among vulnerable communities. Socially responsible investing offers ways to use the pension fund to advocate for the public interest instead of how it is currently used – to empower corporate interests such as fossil fuels or private prisons.

12. How, if at all, do you believe the Gas Works can help reduce carbon emissions in the City? Do you have any other ideas for how PGW should be re-imagined? Please explain.

I believe we need to transition Philly Gas Works to Philly Green Works. As an environmental justice advocate, I am deeply skeptical of the long-term financial or social responsibility of sustaining Philadelphia Gas Works as a gas company. With their history of political lobbying for the fossil fuel

industry and charging customers extra for experiencing the effects of the climate crisis through its Weather Normalization Adjustment costs, PGW has long been an adversary in the fight against climate change in Philadelphia. Transitioning PGW's business away from natural gas and towards affordable and renewable energy sources (e.g., the geothermal energy pilot projects that the utility's leadership proposed funding for in 2022) would reduce carbon emissions and ultimately make Philadelphia a greener municipality. We also need to increase oversight of PGW, including through annual audits from the Controller's office, mandating quarterly stakeholder engagement and business diversification reports, and creating avenues for public feedback on each project PGW undertakes.

13. How would you target your auditing lens regarding the School District, including but not limited to its practices relating to charter schools.

Charter school corruption – one of the biggest problems plaguing the Philadelphia school district – has stripped resources away from public schools and put more money into the hands of the wealthy. I will use audits to investigate charter school finances in collaboration with the Auditor General and school boards, and we will subpoena bank statements where necessary in order to wholly determine charter school expenditures. District-wide, we need to make sure appropriate funding is being spent on capital and school infrastructure projects, educational materials, counseling and medical services, and teachers' wages. Where there are failures, we need to shine a light and repair the damage through partnership with key stakeholders, City Council and the Mayor.